THE EDITORS: AN APOLOGY

THE U.S.-ISRAEL CLASH—ROBERT SATLOFF & THE EDITORS

JUNE 1, 1998 • $3.50

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James Wood on Thomas Mann • Jed Perl on Alexander Calder • Clinton Agonistes

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By David Greenberg

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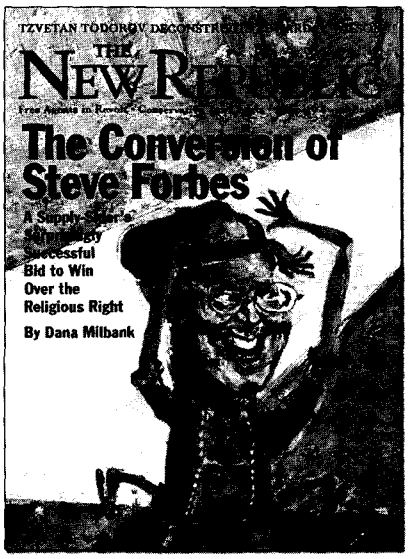
Forbes footnote

To the editors:

When, as Dana Milbank reports, Steve Forbes tells us, "Every saint has a past, every sinner has a future," he is not, as he admitted, quoting the Scripture ("The Conversion of Steve Forbes," April 27). Rather, he is quoting, verbatim, the character of Lord Illingworth, in Oscar Wilde's play *A Woman of No Importance.*

Interestingly, later in the play Lord Illingworth (one of Wilde's irreverent dandies) is given to say, "No son of mine should ever take the side of the Puritans; that is always an error."

MICHAEL ARNDT
Brooklyn, New York



Hong Kong hope

To the editors:

Edward A. Gargan presents a jaundiced view of Hong Kong ("The New Order," April 20). He claims for example that, unlike the British governors of the former British colony, the chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, has surrounded his office with a wrought-iron fence and that this is a symbol of a more secretive, less democratic government.

In fact, all the governors lived and worked at Government House, protected by a security fence and armed police. Tung has chosen to have his office in the same building as his civil servants. Of course there has to be security for the chief executive's offices, but, as Gargan notes, the gates are open day and night.

Gargan says much has changed under Chinese sovereignty. He says that Hong Kong characteristics are being chiseled away and that people loudly expressed their views on call-in radio in the past. In fact Hong Kong continues to be as free and argumentative as ever, and, if anything, these programs have grown in popularity since the handover.

Another change Gargan refers to is the increasing use of Chinese in schools. The teaching of children in their mother tongue is almost universal, and this policy was introduced in Hong Kong years ago while still under British administration. We have had to take an incremental approach. It is not an easy issue because parents have mixed views. Some would prefer to retain English as the language of instruction. The focus has been to achieve the best results educationally, including the maintenance of English-language standards so important to an international city like Hong Kong. To this end we hope to have a further 750 native English-language speakers enroll as teachers in the fall.

Gargan implies that Tung is arbitrary in his approach to Hong Kong's legislative institutions. In fact he is following the Basic Law, which sets out a timetable for the development of democracy in Hong Kong with the clearly stated aim of universal suffrage. The elections to be held on May 24 are entirely in keeping with the framework described. A record number of people have registered as voters, and all the political parties are fielding candidates and enthusiastically vying for seats.

Gargan also referred to two recent decisions by the secretary for justice not to prosecute institutions and individuals from mainland China. The secretary is independent in making such decisions and has already stated widely that she acted without interference from any quarter and without any consideration of the status of the parties concerned or of any political factors. Like her predecessors while Hong Kong was under British administration, she is prevented by her position from divulging details of the reasons for individual decisions and from commenting on cases while they are before a court. These are two of the most important foundations of British law and the law which continues to be practiced in Hong Kong.

Taking the perspective that Gargan has in his article does no justice to the real situation in Hong Kong.

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON
Director General
Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs
Washington, D.C.

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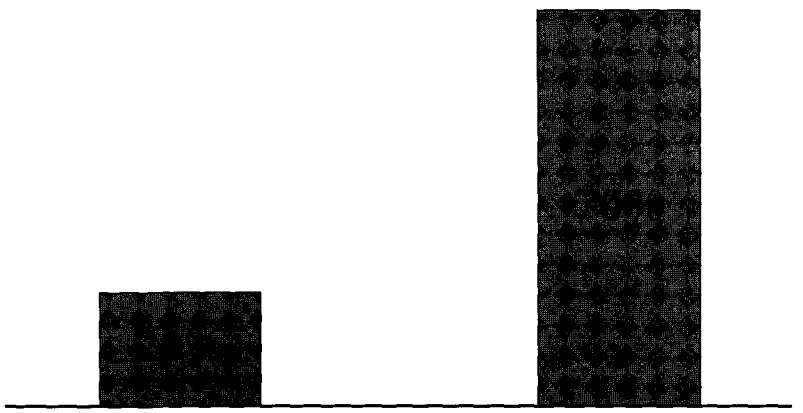
What Do Americans Think Supporters Of The Tobacco Bill Are Really Interested In?



Source: *Wall Street Journal* / NBC News Poll by Hart-Teeter, as reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 1998.

The American people get it. They want to see underage use of tobacco products lowered, but they know that $500,000,000,000 in new taxes, new government bureaucracies and a black market aren't the way to do it. The American people might also find it curious that just two years ago, the FDA told them it had designed rules to cut youth smoking that wouldn't require any new taxes. You can fool some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time.

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"A CRISIS OF PARTNERSHIP"

Already the Clinton administration is backing down from the ultimatum that it issued to the Israeli government to accede to Palestinian demands for withdrawal from the West Bank. Monday, May 11, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had huffed, was the deadline for a settlement. Well, Monday came and went, but Benjamin Netanyahu did not. He chose to resist the blandishments and the threats of Albright and company in favor of protecting the Israeli prerogative to determine its own security concerns. This is not obduracy. It is sovereignty, and we have just celebrated 50 years of Israeli sovereignty. The talks, said Albright, had to be completed that day or else. Now they have been postponed to the end of the month, as the administration continues to badger Israel for concessions. Crisis, shmisis.

Whatever the immediate consequences of the secretary of state's ultimatum, however, there are larger historical reasons for concern. The Clinton administration appears to believe that no price is too high for the restarting of the Israel-Palestinian peace process, and, in its eagerness for momentum for momentum's sake, it has shown itself to be unfaithful as a friend and unwise as an interlocutor. This is a little surprising. At the level of rhetoric and affect, the Clintonites are probably the best friends Israel has ever had in the executive branch. Bill Clinton's personal engagement in the destiny of the Jewish state cannot be gainsaid. Al Gore's is, if anything, more intense. Even as the administration was leaning on Netanyahu, Gore was eloquently telling audiences in Jerusalem, on the anniversary of Israel's independence, how much he supported the Zionist cause.

Now, even the best of friends don't have to agree about what's best for each other. The government of the United States is not obliged, moreover, to endorse to the letter every definition by an Israeli government of its security requirements. Nine percent? Thirteen percent? Reasonable people may differ. But a peace is only as good as the way it was made, and so there is a deeper principle at stake in Washington's latest attempt to save Israel from itself. Washington should be a bit more reticent about instructing a country that lives dangerously to live even more dangerously. Israel exists in that v l—let's face it—always be a hostile environment. d it is being pushed to take ever more defensive risk to entice its Palestinian neighbors into what ll—let s face this, too—always be an unstable agreement. will be Israel's men and women who will die if nd when the gamble fails. For that is what the "peace ocess" is: a great Israeli gamble.

In a speech at the National Press Club on May 12 signed to undo the damage that she wrought, Albright declared that her intention is only to overcome crisis of partnership" between the Israelis and the lestinians. There is a crisis of partnership, all right, t it is between the Israelis and the Americans. Again, e Clinton administration's recent arm-twisting of ael is not just about territory—the insistence that ael withdraw from a further interim 13.1 percent of e West Bank essentially in exchange for future omises by the Palestinians to comply with undertakings to which they had already long ago obliged themselves. It is also about whether Israel can trust America's rd, a word solemnly given a year and a half ago in the ntext of the fraught Israeli withdrawal from Hebron. S. envoy Dennis Ross, who has been shepherding erican Middle East policy since the days of mes Baker, had signed a "note for the record" promising Israel (and informing the Palestinian Authority that the United States had mised Israel) that any "further redeployment phases are issues for implementation by el rather than issues for negotiation with the stinians." In other documents given to the two ies to the talks, Secretary of State Warren Christopher referred explicitly and unambiguously to "Israeli onsibility" for determining by themselves the sensitive military locations they would retain, at least at the ent stage.

What these promises mean—though she does not or them, Albright does not deny them—is that e points were removed from the bilateral agenda. here they are again, at the difficult heart of the eral agenda! Little did anyone contemplate that the dictable and structural Palestinian unhappiness at nine percent withdrawal offered by Netanyahu in nce of the final status talks (when *everything* would

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be on the table) would persuade the United States to renege on these clear commitments. And not only that; it has done so publicly. Madeleine Albright (and Sandy Berger and, at a less grandiose level, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Martin Indyk) have become Yasir Arafat's virtual representatives in the diplomatic tangle: Unless Netanyahu would accept the 13.1 percent withdrawal, which was Albright's number and which the Palestinians happily embraced, she would take her marbles and go home. Our view is that the Israelis should have told her to do just that. Israel would not have suffered in American public opinion, which is now more pro-Israel than ever. So is Congress.

Albright's stance toward Israel dovetails neatly with the traditional State Department view that the Middle East is a problem because Israel is intransigent. Albright is a paradoxical figure: a product of the dovish wing of the Democratic party, which has always preferred to lean on our allies rather than to confront our adversaries, and a student of Zbigniew Brzezinski, who never had much time for Israel's anxieties about security. In truth, Albright's policies toward China and Iraq, the two really important challenges to American interests and American values, seem based on the view that petulance is itself a policy. And now Madeleine Albright addresses Benjamin Netanyahu approximately as she addresses Slobodan Milosevic, as though he merited contumely rather than respect, as though he were the head of a hostile power rather than an ally. She even gave the Israeli prime minister a "reprieve," as if he had committed some sort of crime. Dumping on Netanyahu has become a cliché to account for why American policy in the Middle East has not been exactly brilliant. The real explanation, of course, lies in the administration's fiasco in Iraq and in its fiasco-in-the-making in Iran. Having taken American opinion almost to war against Saddam Hussein, the administration has to face the humiliation of seeing him not simply still in power but still making macabre mechanisms of mass murder. And, ever since Iranian President Khatami mouthed some platitudes about Plymouth Rock and religious freedom, the Clinton State Department has been seeking openings to Tehran and not finding them. Two down, one to go: Israel.

The American scenario is now clear. When the parties come to the final status talks—as they will before too long—the benchmark of Israeli reasonableness will be what Arafat "can accept." This has been the case with the fetishized figure of 13.1 percent. Inevitably it will be the case not just with the extent of withdrawal from the remaining territories but on Palestinian sovereignty and its dimensions, on Jerusalem, on water resources, on the return of refugees, on the whole vortex of issues on which it was imagined—certainly by Yitzhak Rabin—that there would be not just concessions from Israel but reciprocal concessions from both Israel and the Palestinians.

The Palestinians now have no incentive to compromise. They have even been given unexpected encouragement from a bizarre source in the White House: Hillary Rodham Clinton. Some people may believe that she actually didn't know what she was doing when she said that "it would be in the long-term interest of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state." But the Palestinians are taking her remark as a sign about the inclinations of the first lady's husband in the matter, not only of the 13 percent, but also of all the percents remaining.

This arouses the distrust of the present Israeli government and the distrust of its Labor opposition. Of course, the opposition has been making political hay of the prime minister's difficulties with the United States, but, on many of the points in dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, there is little difference between Labor and the Likud. In making Arafat's needs the American standard, Albright has potentially put the U.S. on a collision course with Labor as well, or with the more likely configuration of a government of national unity comprising the country's two big political blocs. Is this what Bill Clinton intends? Or Al Gore?

Just as Secretary Albright was preparing to meet Netanyahu in London, Yasir Arafat gave another one of his rambling interviews to Arab television, this time to the Egyptian Orbit Satellite channel on April 18. Again he compared the Oslo accords to the peace agreement the prophet signed with the Koreish tribe 13 centuries ago, an accord that Mohammed broke within a few years. Arafat couldn't have been clearer in his intentions. "Everyone must know that all options are open before the Palestinian people and not just the Palestinian people but before the entire Arab nation.... The peace agreement which we signed is an inferior peace.... [W]e maintain quiet. We respect agreements the way that the prophet Mohammed and Salah a-Din respected the agreements which they signed." The American interlocutor might contemplate what that means. •

TO OUR READERS

THE NEW REPUBLIC has always been a stringent magazine—stringent about intellectual honesty and stringent about telling the truth. We have not hesitated to hold others to account when they have, in our judgment, transgressed against those norms. But we know that this stringency—which is such an integral part of this institution's 84-year tradition—cannot be credible unless we are willing to apply it to ourselves when appropriate.

It is appropriate now.

We must be stringent with ourselves because, from the issue dated December 25, 1995, to the issue dated

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May 18, 1998, and under three different editors, Andrew Sullivan, Michael Kelly, and Charles Lane (the present editor), THE NEW REPUBLIC has published 41 articles by Stephen Glass.

These editors did so in the sincere belief that they were publishing the legitimate work of a promising journalist—a young man with a flair for keen observation and colorful anecdotes. However, we now know to a moral certainty that, in at least one instance—Glass's article, "Hack Heaven," (May 18, 1998)—his story about purported payoffs by computer companies to computer hackers was not the product of keen observation or intrepid reporting. The entire article was made up out of whole cloth. Glass has made a partial confession; the remaining confirmation came from an internal investigation conducted by the editor. (And to give credit where credit is due: Our questioning of Glass was prompted by an inquiry from reporters at the Web site of *Forbes* magazine, *Forbes Digital Tool*, who contacted us to indicate that they had been unable to confirm any of the facts in the piece independently.)

We hereby retract that story and apologize for publishing it. Stephen Glass has been dismissed from his position as associate editor.

Even one such violation of our standards is too many. Regrettably, a preliminary investigation of Glass's previous work suggests that there may be others. Based on those inquiries, we now believe that two other articles that have appeared recently in our pages cannot be substantiated. They are: "Monica Sells," Glass's account of a purported convention of political novelty vendors in Rockville, Maryland (April 13, 1998), and "Plotters," Glass's account of a purported meeting of anti-Clinton activists in Virginia (February 23, 1998). Additionally, we believe that Glass manufactured the opening anecdotes of the article "Praised Be Greenspan" (March 30, 1998), concerning activities at purported investment houses in New York. We would like to offer our apologies for publishing this material as well.

Rechecking Glass's stories is a laborious process. But be assured that we will continue to investigate all of the writing Glass did for this magazine.

How could this happen? It is a perfectly fair question. We have been asked it repeatedly since we informed the press of Glass's firing, and we expect to be confronted with it again and again. We are asking it of ourselves. The editors of THE NEW REPUBLIC, like those of other magazines, have devised fact-checking procedures to insure the accuracy of our copy. Generally, we believe our record in this regard has been a good one. Plainly, however, the precautions we took were not adequate to prevent Glass's fabrications from making it into print. We intend to find out why and to take corrective action where necessary.

We editors take responsibility for the failures of discernment that permitted this false material to be published. But it is important to understand that our editing and fact-checking systems are designed to defend against the errors and mistakes even good professionals sometimes make—not against the systematic and intentional deceptions of someone who actually has no business practicing journalism.

We assumed that no person who calls himself a journalist, least of all a member of our own TNR family, would attempt to work with us on any other basis. In Stephen Glass's case, this assumption was not warranted. For reasons known only to him, Glass mounted what appears to have been quite an elaborate effort, including the falsification of documents and reporter's notes, to trick our editors and elude our fact-checkers.

Looking to the future, our commitment to you, our readers, is to do whatever is necessary to restore any of your trust in us that may have been lost as a result of this extraordinary situation. We are not proud of the fact that Glass's falsehoods ever made it into our pages in the first place. But, once we had a reasonable basis to suspect that such falsehoods might have been published, we immediately investigated. Once we established the facts, we promptly removed the culprit, and we publicly acknowledged the problem. THE NEW REPUBLIC's stringent tradition demanded nothing less. •

A troubled housing program gets "fixed."

BROKEN HOME

By Jessica Korn

Early this week, a disturbing report on the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) elicited an even more disturbing response from the Clinton administration. The report came from the Chicago Fair Housing Alliance. It showed that the FHA's mortgage insurance program—a New Deal program designed to secure mortgages for people who might not otherwise qualify for loans—is today bringing more foreclosures to blighted neighborhoods, thus harming some of the very communities it should serve. The response came from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, where a spokeswoman told *The New York Times* that the program might simply "require additional improvement and reform."

Unfortunately, "additional improvement and reform" won't be enough. For one thing, the Chicago report was not the first to highlight the FHA's harmful impact on the inner city. A recent study conducted by the National Training and Information Center, a nonprofit resource center for community groups, found that a disproportionate number of defaults on FHA-insured loans occur in economically depressed neighborhoods.

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What's more, those defaults have put the FHA in dire financial condition. Last year, the FHA paid out $5.3 billion in claims to mortgage bankers who foreclosed 71,599 borrowers—an 18 percent jump over the number of claims paid in 1996. The FHA recently confirmed that it expects to acquire twice as much foreclosed property in 1998 as it expected only a year ago.

But the really disturbing thing about HUD's reaction is what the spokeswoman didn't say: The administration has already delivered to Congress a proposal that will make matters worse. This year, HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo has proposed to raise the qualifying mortgage limit to a $227,150 nationwide maximum from the current range of $87,317 to $170,362, depending on local housing costs. The expansion's programmatic effect would be to drastically expand the number of loans that the FHA is authorized to insure—without changing the way loans are meted out.

Unfortunately, the flaw with the FHA program isn't the low number of loans. It's the high proportion of bad ones. Lenders bear no risk when they make FHA-insured loans (because the FHA provides a 100 percent guarantee), and they make twice as much profit on FHA-insured mortgages as they would on conventional mortgages. As a result, they have an incentive to make bad loans on shabby properties. And since the criteria for getting an FHA-backed loan is the size of the mortgage—not the borrower's income—many FHA loans go not to the neediest people but to the least credit-worthy. Today, FHA-insured loans are three times as likely to default as conventional loans. Property scandals have hampered the agency's ability to sell the houses it acquires as a result of foreclosure.

To be sure, higher default rates are inherent in a program that targets people whose lack of satisfactory credit history, or lack of money for down payments, makes them ineligible for regular loans. But, if the goal is to serve poor Americans better, why base eligibility on home value rather than income? And why then expand eligibility to include more expensive homes? Remember, 63 percent of families who purchase homes between $170,000 and $220,000—that is, the people who would be newly eligible for FHA help—make an annual income of over $80,000. More to the point, HUD itself predicts that, because of changes in some of its rental vouchers programs, fewer low-income Americans will need the FHA's help in the first place.

So what, then, is the real motivation behind the proposed expansion? Look no further than the FHA's financial crisis. Since borrowers pay fees on FHA-backed loans, this proposed expansion would produce about $1 billion in additional receipts over the next five years. But, while increasing participation now will bump up revenues enough to pay off the rising claims of private lenders who made bad loans yesterday, the new loans will be even more likely to default than the old ones. Those who borrow $200,000 or more with the FHA's low down payments are nearly three times as likely to default as those with loans of $50,000 to $74,000.

The FHA could expand eligibility while simultaneously reducing the 100 percent guarantee. But it's unlikely to do so because that would further cut the FHA's diminished share of the mortgage market—which the administration seems unwilling to do. The conventional loan market used to consist of one-size-fits-all mortgages, requiring at least a ten percent down payment. Today, thanks partly to prodding from the federal government, half of the loans insured by private mortgage insurers require less than ten percent down payments. Conventional loans to blacks, Hispanics, and low-income families have grown at substantially faster rates in the past few years than those to white and median-income families. In the 1940s, more than half the new homes in America were built with FHA-insured mortgages. The FHA backed 45 percent of all mortgages. Today, the FHA's share of the mortgage market is just ten percent.

Why not just let the FHA mortgage program shrink? Indeed, Cuomo and the Clinton administration should celebrate the program's diminishing importance and take the necessary steps to make it sound. Fixing the eligibility criteria would be a good first step. From there, the FHA could cut down on the 100 percent government-backed guarantee to make sure that all of its partners in loan transactions share some risk. Cutting down on the profitability of FHA-backed loans might also encourage lender sobriety. Alas, those ideas aren't on the table right now, which probably means real reform won't come until the FHA loses more money—and causes more pain among those it's supposed to help.

JESSICA KORN is a fellow at the Freedom Forum in New York City.

LONDON POSTCARD

BED, BATH, & BARD

By Susan Ellicott

It's lunchtime at the Marks & Spencer department store in Norwich, a drab market town in southeast England, and Peter Sansom is the only male employee in the staff cafeteria not wearing a necktie. But that suits his bosses just fine. After all, nobody's planning to send the scuff-shoed, baggy-sweater-clad Sansom to a sales meeting. He's the new in-house poet.

M&S is the first department store in Britain, and quite possibly the world, to have a poet-in-residence. Sansom has a half-year contract that pays about $1,500

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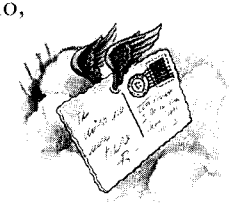
per month—a kingly sum by a poet's modest standards.

This doesn't mean M&S products will now feature rhyming slogans. Nor was Sansom hired to roam the store's food halls, reciting sonnets to customers. He simply represents an experiment by senior executives to demystify the arts and sciences for employees, while encouraging staff to mix. It's all part of an effort to boost staff morale. Recently, for example, the company offered employees a performance in a dining hall by dancers from the Royal Ballet, a lecture on quantum physics, and a visit to London's Institute of Contemporary Arts. (The latter was deemed a success when one participant told the organizer afterwards, "I still think the art is crap, but at least I understand it now.")



And then, of course, there's Sansom, who, among his other activities, holds hour-long writing workshops four times a month at M&S's marble-lobbied headquarters on London's Baker Street. Already, Sansom has managed to unearth some hidden talents. When he asked a class to write a poem from the point of view of a match in a box in someone's cardigan pocket, "one person had a terrific last line," Sansom chuckles. "The match was being lit, and he wrote, 'Voilà, my head explodes.'"

Despite its novelty, Sansom's arrival at Marks & Spencer strikes few Britons as extraordinary. British schoolchildren grow up reading and writing poems in English classes, while the London Tube has long treated its straphangers to verse posted inside its subway cars. Indeed, poets-in-residence have been springing up in Britain like Wordsworth's daffodils. Many of them, like Sansom, are assigned by the country's Poetry Society, which receives government grants from the national lottery. Kew Gardens has a poet. So does the BBC. London Zoo may be getting one. Even Barnsley Football Club, a professional soccer team in England's downtrodden industrial belt, has one. "If you don't have an in-house poet these days, you're nobody," jokes Sansom.

So far, M&S appears delighted. "He's maybe not the greatest poet in the world," concedes Julia Havis, who coordinates the store's cultural events, "but he's the best for what we want him to do, which is communicate to other people. He doesn't take himself seriously. He misses trains. He forgets his fare. I have to lend him money. But all that makes him seem more of a poet."

When we meet, Sansom is at the Norwich "regional superstore" to hold a workshop. An intense young man in a crisp navy-blue suit says the staff is "very honored" to have a poet. Yet the day is no roaring success. The man in charge is on vacation and forgot to remind people. Unruffled, Sansom sits down to eat lunch in the canteen with his two-year-old daughter, Mary, whom he's been wheeling around in a stroller. Midway through a pot of chocolate pudding, a potential poetry student finally shows up.

A stocky, broad-faced chap with a sunny disposition, Steve MacMillan-Johnston is an ex-musician who used to write blues songs. He apologizes for bringing no poetry, but his father is dying, his wife is ill, and, after work, he cooks and cleans for his three children aged six to 14. Yet he still wakes up every morning and "itches" to write.

Does he have any published work? inquires Sansom. The man looks a bit sheepish—just some jokes in a newspaper in 1976. Everything counts, Sansom assures him. And they discuss the man's favorite poets, among them the Beat generation's Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, as well as England's more traditional John Betjeman, a late poet laureate. He tells Sansom about "a guy in menswear" who brings his writing into work and "another on the operations side" who writes short stories. Sansom promises to come back.

Certainly, Sansom has a common touch. A fortyish father of four, he was the first in his family to attend a university, where a teacher encouraged him to write. His first book, published in 1990, sold 2,000 copies in a year, which he says is "a lot for a poet." He called it *Everything You've Heard Is True*, which he found "quite witty" since "nobody had heard anything about it." He guesses that sales of his second book, out since 1994, have yet to pay off his $800 advance.

No matter. Sansom seems happy with his lot. His stint at Marks & Spencer has given him more publicity this year alone than anything else in his career. It has also inspired many of the poems in his next book, including one about a washing machine in product development that puts clothes through five years' worth of washes in three hours.

"Friends tell me, 'Peter, you're really lucky you've managed to do exactly what you've wanted to do,' which is write poems, but I don't see it like that," he says. "I'm unemployable at anything else."

SUSAN ELLICOTT is a writer and broadcaster whose work has appeared in *The Times of London* and *The New York Times*.

THE HARD QUESTIONS

EUROTRASH

By Ronald Steel

Imagine that our European NATO partners announced that they would soon fuse their national armies into a single force under the command of a European general staff. Imagine further that they agreed to set up staff headquarters in Germany and chose the new force's commanding officer.

Far-fetched? Not at all. It's the logical next step in Europe's accelerating drive toward unity. For the moment, countries have fused their economies and their curren-

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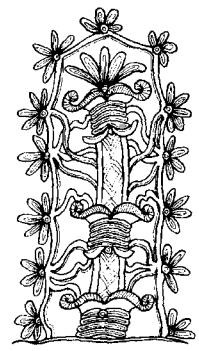
cies, not their military forces. But, where the mark, the franc, the lira, and the guilder are headed, armies, fleets, and air squadrons will eventually follow. And, when that happens, all the assumptions on which U.S. policy toward Europe has rested for the past 25 years—American dominance of NATO, a de facto U.S. nuclear monopoly in the alliance, European acquiescence to Washington's political leadership, the absence of a strong European voice on critical global issues—may fade into the historical limbo of the cold war.

European union—not just a common market but a common currency, a common defense, and a common diplomacy—has been talked about for decades. In fact, the talk lasted so long that union came to resemble the kingdom of heaven: something to be devoutly desired but deferred into the indefinitely receding future. Many, myself included, doubted that European countries would ever scrap that essential attribute of sovereignty—their currencies—as the price of unity.

But now they have chosen the first president of the European Central Bank (after some bickering over who would get the post) with its headquarters in Germany, the economic powerhouse of the European Union. The currency that it oversees, the euro, will be born in scarcely seven months.



For public consumption, Washington is upbeat about the prospect. "An integrated Europe is America's natural best partner for the twenty-first century," President Clinton has said. "If [European monetary union] is good for Europe, it will be good for us," chimes in Lawrence Summers, number two at the Treasury Department. But these feel-good phrases conceal fears that a Europe moving toward real economic integration may be a less reliable and less predictable partner for the United States—or perhaps not even a partner at all. Leave it to Newt Gingrich to dispense with niceties by suggesting that Britain drop out of the European Union and join NAFTA.

Newt's onto something. Farsighted American officials harbored doubts about European union long ago—even before the 1960s when General de Gaulle began complaining about United States "hegemony." Henry Kissinger wrote 20 years ago that "divergences on monetary and trade policy were already increasingly apparent" and that "a politically united Europe was more likely to articulate its own conceptions in other areas as well." What was possible then seems increasingly likely now—particularly because fear of Moscow no longer keeps Europe clinging to the U.S. for protection.

On the economic front alone, a unified European economic policy, backed by a powerful euro, poses potential problems. First, as Gerard Baker notes in the *Financial Times*, it challenges the dominance of the dollar as the global currency—a dominance that allows the U.S. to finance its external deficit ($160 billion this year) from its own currency. If the U.S. had to pay off its debt in euros, it would face higher borrowing costs and diminished freedom of action.

Second, monetary union will probably make European economies more efficient and thereby richer and more powerful. Whereas the dollar is now the unchallenged global currency, a strong euro could help build a powerful European economy. Striking a sensitive nerve, the chief economist at the powerful Deutsche Bank recently boasted that "the euro will be to the dollar what Airbus is to Boeing."

Washington foreign policy types, now basking in a self-congratulatory triumphalism, tend to denigrate a "eurosclerosis" marked by low economic growth, high unemployment and social benefits, and "inflexible" labor markets. But this is changing. Across the European Union, growth is rising to a projected three percent average this year, unemployment is beginning to fall, privatization is spreading, and both inflation and deficits are under control. This year every EU member except Greece met the criteria for monetary union: limiting the budget deficit to three percent of GDP. Inflation is at the same level as in the U.S.

To be sure, there are plenty of economic barriers to turning the EU into a powerhouse. Growth could stall, unemployment could shoot up as competition stiffens, and deficits could jump. Germany could throw its economic weight around and try to dominate the EU politically. France and Britain could balk or choose sides. Petty bickering and fears over diminished status could torpedo the whole enterprise. But these perils were inherent from the beginning (as they were among the fledgling states of the American union), and they have been surmounted.

What is striking is that the will for unity has steadily increased. Now, it is fortified by the absence of a serious external threat and by modernizations of the European economy that set the stage for years of growth. The eleven EU states that have embraced the common currency (four are on the sidelines) have a combined population greater than that of the U.S., an equal share (19 percent) of world GDP, and a bigger cut (18.6 percent) of world trade.

If Europe succeeds, what will it be? For the first time, American policymakers have to ask that question seriously. During the long cold war, they could piously affirm their dedication to European unification, while knowing that, so long as the Russians growled and the Germans were divided, nothing serious would come of it. Now, that has all changed.

An economically unified Europe will have not only its central bank in Frankfurt but its nerve center in Berlin. It will be a Europe of many parts, some of them fiercely nationalistic and sensitive, but with one dominant leader. Germany is no longer a Western outpost in the East but the very center of a uniting Europe. And its loyalties, like its interests, will be increasingly more European than Atlantic.

Such a Europe will almost inevitably develop independent military structures, pursue separate policies toward Russia, China, and the Middle East, and challenge the premise of American leadership that NATO has operated under for the past 50 years. Indeed, it will

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make it harder to use NATO as an instrument to keep Europe under American direction. Moving NATO east by pulling in new members—a policy vigorously pursued by the Clinton administration—will only stimulate the creation of a larger, stronger Europe. Of course, the Europeans embraced NATO expansion. It offers a cost-free insurance policy while the house is being built.

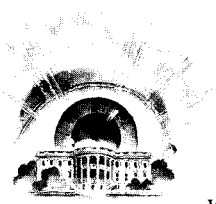
For decades, Americans in high places breezily proclaimed their support for a self-reliant "European pillar" of NATO, while blithely assuming it could never be built. They should have been more careful what they wished for. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

CLINTON AGONISTES

By Dana Milbank

The morning papers often bring a sense of unease to the White House, but a front-page headline last week in *USA Today* particularly annoyed all the president's men. "CLINTON: I AM NOT NIXON," it said. The president didn't actually say that, of course. He simply said: "I am not a crook." No, no, his actual words were, "the facts are quite different in this case," referring to his rejected claim of executive privilege and Nixon's claim for the same 24 years ago. Clinton wouldn't specify just how the claims are different when ambushed with the inevitable question at a news conference with the Italian prime minister; his press secretary, Mike McCurry, didn't say much more when razzed by reporters later. The trick here is for the White House to convince everyone that Clinton is not Nixon without actually saying it. This is a difficult thing to do because Clinton's lawyers—who are expected to make the mistake of appealing the privilege ruling—are doing a fine job of prolonging the embarrassing comparison.



The conundrum no doubt thrills Ken Starr, whose San Antonio speech on May 1, comparing himself to Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, succeeded in dredging up the old Nixon TV footage. Together with Clinton's privilege defeat, the comparison has invited hundreds of newspaper and television mentions. Never mind that Nixon's own counsel, John Dean, on CBS's "Face the Nation," disavowed a parallel. And never mind the most obvious differences: Top administration officials haven't been indicted this time, impeachment isn't a serious possibility, and there's no suggestion of a smoking gun hidden by Clinton's privilege claim. If Clinton and his pals try to argue that he's not Nixon, it only validates the comparison. And yet they have to do something to counter the comparison in the coming weeks and months.

So the Clinton loyalists are developing a new strategy: Morph Starr into Nixon—and, while they're at it, turn Starr lieutenant W. Hickman Ewing Jr. into Nixon Attorney General John Mitchell. James Carville has already taken to the airwaves to proclaim Starr "the real Nixonian character here," a line echoed both inside and outside the White House. (Carville is writing a book on Starr and Clinton's enemies.) Now, a few of the president's friends are kicking around an anti-Starr plan of action. Democrats are floating a proposal to issue their own Starr report—an investigation to discredit Starr's investigation—before the independent counsel's report to Congress. Such a report, which would be issued by House Democrats or some other body outside of the White House, would stack up all of Starr's dealings over the last four years and attempt to demonstrate illegal collusion with various enemies of the president.

The report—which wouldn't have White House fingerprints—may not be written, and it may not be convincing. But its appeal is clear. It would allow the Clintonites to weave together the various anti-Starr threads into one big charge: The independent counsel has colluded and coordinated with Whitewater witness David Hale, with Linda Tripp, with the Paula Jones defense team, and with Congressman Dan Burton and his recently fired investigator, David Bossie. For good measure, it could also tie in the White House's long-standing feud with Starr over leaks. Regardless of whether Starr's foes succeed in making the man look like a criminal, they'll create a food-fight atmosphere on the Hill, softening the impact of Starr's report. House Democrats putting together a Starr report might follow the model of Henry Waxman, whose successful attack on Burton over the creative editing of Webster Hubbell's prison conversations managed to overshadow completely the damaging material that was on the tapes.

Morphing Starr into Nixon, with or without a report, is one of the few ways Clinton loyalists have to seize the advantage in the sprawling scandal. The White House is feeling buffeted by events, unable to impose its customary control of timing and information. One moment Starr folds his Arkansas grand jury without indicting Hillary (good news), and the next moment Judge Norma Holloway Johnson rejects Clinton's executive privilege claim (bad news). One moment word comes that a looming report by the Justice Department's Charles LaBella could reignite the campaign finance scandal (bad news), and the next moment Chairman Burton self-destructs (good news). At this writing, the White House is cleaning up after the latest independent counsel appointment, this one for Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, while bracing for the next two waves: the unsealing of the privilege arguments (sure to revive the Nixon comparisons) and the ruling on Clinton's assertion of Secret Service privilege. The frustration is apparent. One of Clinton's supporters even took a break from bashing Starr and company

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to lash out at the "idiot judge" Johnson.

The White House is managing the scandal well enough from news cycle to news cycle. But it has no convincing strategy to deal with the big event, when the Judiciary Committee takes up Starr's report. Clinton's critics see his privilege claims and the other shenanigans as a way to delay that moment, and, indeed, it's hard to believe that the White House genuinely fears the testimony of Bruce Lindsey and Sidney Blumenthal, the two aides in question. But the delay explanation probably misunderstands the extent to which Clinton's legal team is doing its own thing. The lawyers, in the preparation meeting for Clinton's press conference last week, didn't even want Clinton to acknowledge the existence of an executive privilege claim. They allowed only an implicit acknowledgment after McCurry argued that pretending otherwise would subject the president to ridicule.

Still, the White House's legal delays, deliberate or not, give the president's defenders more time to put together a cohesive strategy for when the lights go on in the Judiciary Committee hearing room. It appears increasingly doubtful that Clinton will offer any early disclosures on the Lewinsky matter to blunt the Starr report's impact. The White House therefore needs an anti-Starr report, or some other diversion, to soften the blow.

Turning Starr into Nixon is an ugly business, but it's better than the alternative for the White House, which is to keep quiet while the president's foes gleefully connect the dots between Clinton and Nixon. To see how far one can take the Nixon metaphor beyond the privilege case, I had a little brainstorm with R. Emmett Tyrell Jr., editor of *The American Spectator* and author of a Clinton-impeachment fantasy. "I think Mrs. Clinton is Nixon," he says. "I refer to her as Hillary Millhouse Clinton." Just as Nixon feared a conspiracy involving the Council on Foreign Relations, the first lady fears a right-wing conspiracy, says Tyrell (whose one-time patron, Richard Mellon Scaife, bankrolls said purported conspiracy). Nixon lambasted Archibald Cox for being a friend of the Kennedys; Clinton attacks Starr for his Republican buddies. Nixon had his enemies list; the Clinton administration has investigated reporters like *The Washington Post*'s Susan Schmidt. And don't forget the FBI files link. "Colson was put away for having one FBI file in his illicit little hands," Tyrell says. "These guys had nine hundred."

Tyrell was just warming up. Nixon's use of the IRS to persecute his enemies is like, um, Travelgate. "Clinton sent the IRS out to harass a private travel agency in Tennessee," Tyrell says. But why stop there? Surely he could come up with a Vincent Foster connection, too, I prodded. Tyrell was momentarily stumped. "Wait a second, hold on.... Yeah, there is a parallel!" the exultant conspirator exclaimed. "Nixon's people broke into their political opponents' office to sneak out documents. It's a matter of record that Clinton people broke into their own employee's office, Foster's, to sneak out documents. There *is* a parallel!"

Better get that anti-Starr report going. •

The U.S.'s disturbing new Israel policy.

SHIFTING SANDS

By Robert Satloff

Just days after America's two most powerful men—the president and the vice president—celebrated Israel's fiftieth anniversary in special ceremonies in Washington and Jerusalem, America's two most powerful women—the first lady and the secretary of state—offered a very different coda to Israel's jubilee. Speaking at the close of London peace talks on May 5, Madeleine Albright issued a "conditional invitation" to Israel and the Palestinian Authority to participate in a White House summit meeting to launch the last phase of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. She did so knowing that, while the Palestinians had already accepted the U.S. conditions, Israel was unlikely to do the same. The practical implication of her move was to press Israel to endorse "American ideas" on a West Bank "further redeployment" (a.k.a. "FRD," diplospeak for "territorial withdrawal") that the Israeli Cabinet had been resisting for months. While the administration rejected the imagery, virtually every observer, from Israel's racy tabloids to the venerable *New York Times*, termed her gambit an "ultimatum."

Then, just 24 hours later, Hillary Rodham Clinton uttered words never before heard in public from a White House occupant: She told a group of Arab and Israeli schoolchildren that it would be in the "long-term interests of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state." While only conspiracy theorists believe that the timing of these shots across Israel's bow was more than coincidental, the cumulative effect of these two events is almost enough to make Yasir Arafat a feminist.

For two countries linked by shared values and common interests, the issuance of ultimata is a regrettable but time-honored tradition in U.S.-Israel relations. History shows that virtually every Israeli prime minister—Labor and Likud—had at least one showdown with the United States. For David Ben Gurion, it was Dwight Eisenhower's order to quit Sinai in 1956; for Menachem Begin, who had more than his share, perhaps the most mano-a-mano face-off was Ronald Reagan's 1982 demand to stop the shelling of Beirut; even the late Yitzhak Rabin, serving his first term in the mid-1970s, suffered a "reassessment" of U.S.-Israeli ties when Henry Kissinger, then negotiating a Sinai disengagement agreement with Egypt, insisted upon a deeper territorial withdrawal than Israel thought was necessary. As was the case in each of these episodes, history also shows that Israel's leaders often—but certainly not always—blink first.

In the current crisis, Benjamin Netanyahu has so far

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bucked that trend, and both sides seem to have dug in their heels. In London, Albright conceded that "it is obviously up to Israel to decide what its security requirements are" but then went on to rule out any "watering down" of her proposals. For his part, Netanyahu has repeatedly vented against "dictates" and staked his credibility on rejecting the magic number—13.1 percent—that Washington has divined for an FRD. However, the Israeli prime minister's words have been calibrated so as not to cause irreparable harm to his relationship with the White House, which he still wants (and needs) to play a central role in Israeli-Palestinian mediation. Indeed, chances are at least 50–50 that some artful compromise will be found that finesses the difference between the U.S. and Israeli positions and permits the Washington summit to proceed in late May.

Should that occur, most friends of the U.S.-Israel relationship will heave a sigh of relief and speedily consign this contretemps to a historical footnote. Some will even note that the overall package is a pretty good deal for Israel's Likud-led government: a much smaller redeployment than some Labor Party negotiators had led Arafat to expect; a vague agreement to fudge, at least for now, on the explosive issue of still another redeployment due later this summer; the convening (or reconvening, to be precise) of "final status" talks that Netanyahu has been advocating for more than a year as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian impasse.

But, in emphasizing the trees of any putative agreement instead of the forest in which they are found, these observers would be myopic. When the dust settles, the details of such an accord will matter much less than the shifts in U.S. policy—and changes in the Oslo accords themselves—that the Clinton administration has sanctioned in order to achieve it. Arafat, who has always kept his eye on the big picture and the long run, almost certainly understood this. Hence, his willingness to sign on to "American ideas" that do require from him some significant tactical concessions.

There are, in fact, four major implications of the U.S. ultimatum that will almost surely outlive the current imbroglio. They concern four principles—assurance, conditionality, sequence, and precedent—and each has an impact on the credibility of the negotiating process and of the U.S. role in it.

Assurance: For more than 20 years, the United States has periodically assuaged Israeli anxieties about the peace process by providing written promises of how Washington would conduct its diplomacy as it tries to balance the seemingly contradictory roles of ally to one party (Israel) and honest broker to all. These documents are the product of laborious negotiation, and, once agreed to, acquire a biblical sacredness and invite talmudic interpretation.

In January 1997, Secretary of State Warren Christopher provided just such a letter to the Netanyahu government. The letter followed Israel's agreement to withdraw from most of Hebron and its assent to a U.S.-authored document called the "note for the record," which was designed as a road map for future implementation of the Oslo accords. According to that letter (and as other official correspondence confirmed), the U.S. government held that the determination of the size and scope of Oslo's FRDs was solely an "Israeli responsibility"—that is, a unilateral act, for which the prior agreement of the Palestinians (and, for that matter, the Americans) is not necessary. The current U.S. approach—articulating firm U.S. "bridging proposals" on what would constitute a "credible" redeployment—is a clear departure from that earlier pledge. As such, it cannot but throw into doubt the credibility of other U.S. assurances, past and future.

Conditionality: Few would contest the notion that Arafat's entry ticket into the Oslo accords was his unconditional commitment not only to renounce terrorism but to fight it, as enshrined in the original letters of Israel-PLO mutual recognition he exchanged with Yitzhak Rabin. Indeed, whenever the Palestinian Authority repeats its incantation that even one-hundred percent effort cannot guarantee one-hundred percent results, it tacitly affirms its obligation to use all its power, all the time, to prevent terrorism and punish terrorists. In a fine August 1997 address, Secretary of State Albright personally embraced this idea, calling security the "sine qua non" of the peace process.

The London ultimatum, however, changes this equation to "further redeployments are the sine qua non of the peace process." That is because the "American ideas" reportedly include an array of improvements in Palestinian security operations—from increased cooperation with Israel to U.S. supervision of the PA's "revolving door" prisons—to which Arafat has agreed but which are not being implemented (and for which the U.S. is not, at the moment, pressing) because of the U.S.-Israel disagreement over FRDs. Effectively, therefore, the U.S. position permits the Palestinians to link improvements in their security effort to Israeli withdrawal, rendering conditional the one Palestinian promise that was supposed to be absolute.

Sequence: Timing, it is said, is everything, and the Oslo accords are no exception. Here, the specific dates by which certain obligations were to have been fulfilled are less important than the sequence in which they were to be implemented. Oslo is very clear: Final status talks and the process of FRDs should proceed simultaneously, not sequentially. In fact, according to the accords, final status talks should have been up and running before Israel was required to make even its first redeployment.

Somehow, over the last two years, this basic element of the Oslo accords got turned on its head, with most media erroneously reporting that the redeployments should be concluded before final status talks could start. By its actions in London—conditioning the "launching" of "accelerated permanent status negotiations" on Israel's agreement to implement redeployments—the U.S. government seems to have endorsed this rewriting of the Oslo timetable. (Only in the world of Middle East diplomacy can the adjective "acceler-

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ated" be attached to a set of negotiations whose resumption is more than a year overdue and whose conclusion is less than a year away!)

Precedent: Perhaps the most lasting implication of the London showdown between Albright and Netanyahu will be the precedent it sets for future negotiations, both the final status talks with the Palestinians and eventual discussions with the Syrians over the Golan Heights. Precedents, of course, are made to be broken, but this is one that Arafat, as well as Hafez al-Assad, will be keen to maintain. On an issue of marginal importance to U.S. strategic interests, but one that, for whatever reason, the Israeli government deemed was central to its own strategic interests (i.e., whether Israel withdraws from nine percent, eleven percent, or 13 percent of West Bank territory in the interim period of the Oslo process), the United States is willing to align itself publicly with the Arab party and to threaten Israel with a "reexamination" of the U.S. role in the peace process. While this does not mean that Washington will adopt the same policy when weightier issues, such as Jerusalem, are on the table, there is no certainty that it won't.

That is what makes Mrs. Clinton's comments on a Palestinian state, along with the lame White House post-event spin effort, so disconcerting. Of all the items on the agenda of Israeli-Palestinian final status talks, Palestinian statehood is the one about which the United States has had the least ambiguous position. Check the record of U.S. policy, and you will find positions on sensitive issues like the legal status of Jerusalem and Israeli settlements that are far closer to Arab views than Israel's. Even when the administration is bound by law to adopt a position—such as the recognition of Jerusalem required by a 1995 statute passed into law without Clinton's signature—the administration has demurred. Indeed, one of the most remarkable achievements of the U.S.-Israeli relationship over the past 30 years has been to contain the fallout from differences over these core issues.

But, on Palestinian statehood, the U.S. and Israel have long seen eye to eye, with Washington consistently taking its view from Jerusalem. Even in the post-Oslo era, when press guidance has been to duck answers to final status questions so as not to "prejudice the outcome of negotiations," the issue of statehood has sometimes been an exception. For example, in February 1994, five months after the signing of the original Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles, Secretary of State Christopher said the following to the House Foreign Affairs Committee: "Certainly, the United States does not support a Palestinian state.... Certainly, I think the responsible officials of Israel ... are the best judge as to whether or not the steps they've taken are the right ones for Israel. We're helping them [the Israeli leaders] *try to achieve the results that they want to achieve.* I think that's *the proper role* for the United States in this situation. We do not certainly support a Palestinian state, as we never have" (emphasis added). In trying to contain the damage from Mrs. Clinton's remarks, White House spokespeople said she was speaking for herself, not for the administration. No one, however, cited longstanding U.S. policy on the issue. And, given how far Washington has come from fulfilling Christopher's definition of "the proper role" for the United States in the peace process, it is not surprising that no one in the White House cited the words of Madeleine Albright's predecessor either.

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The shrinking college president.

SMALL MEN ON CAMPUS

By David Greenberg

Wide-eyed, the teenagers roam Harvard Yard with their wide-eyed parents, stopping to photograph the statue of John Harvard that anchors the greensward. It is a brisk, sunny April afternoon, and the newly admitted class of 2002 can't help marveling at what will, suddenly, be theirs for a lifetime. Moments later across the quad, in an unassuming brick building called Massachusetts Hall, an unassuming former poetry scholar named Neil Rudenstine fiddles with his eyeglasses as he ruminates about his duties to his newest charges.

"What is the job of the university president now?" Harvard's twenty-sixth president asks. It is a question on the mind of many administrators and professors, students

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and parents, in an age when the academy seems to be in crisis. "The job of the university president now has to do with continuing to set academic priorities. Second, trying to keep the institution humane. And, third, taking it as your threshold that you will leave the institution no worse off than you found it—and, prayerfully, better off than you found it." His word "prayerfully" hangs in the air; Rudenstine seems to suggest that only higher powers can decide whether he will reach his goal.

Since Rudenstine assumed his post in July 1991, he has poured untold hours into keeping his school academically vital, humane, and at least as good as it was for its first 350-plus years. On this particular morning, he has recently returned from Asia. As his undergraduates flocked to Florida or the Caribbean for spring break, Rudenstine, 63, hopscotched across China, cultivating ties with alumni there and laying the groundwork for the school's new outpost in Hong Kong. If he looks a touch jet-lagged, he remains alert and engaged—remarkably so for a man who works between 85 hours a week (his own estimate) and upwards of 100 (the reckoning of others). He seems as his friends and colleagues describe him: a gracious presence, skilled at blunting the sharp edge of conflict; a sincere and attentive listener; and, to use a phrase applied to him over and again, "a nice guy."

Yet in his modesty it's also possible to see why the president of the world's most acclaimed university has remained almost unknown outside Harvard's walls. In seven years on the job, Rudenstine's major achievements are the insider's triumphs of management: integrating Harvard's unwieldy system of twelve balkanized schools; curing the $1.5 billion budget of its chronic deficits; running the largest fund-raising drive in the history of higher education; and keeping the institution of 18,500 students and 2,200 professors humming along. Though he has made a few forays into the public square—notably to champion racial diversity in higher education—most people are unaware of them. If they know his name at all, they typically associate him with a three-month leave of absence he took in 1994 to recover from exhaustion.

Rudenstine shares his relative anonymity with roughly 3,200 other college and university presidents. Simply put, these men and women aren't leaders of national opinion anymore. When they do make headlines these days, it's usually because of scandal: Peter Diamandopoulos of Adelphi gets fired after securing a university-financed Manhattan condominium for his private use. Stanford's Donald Kennedy steps down after spending federal grant money on maintaining such "overhead" expenses as a 72-foot yacht and a grand piano. American University's Richard Berendzen is caught making obscene phone calls from his office. Even the clean ones are forced to squirm when *The Chronicle of Higher Education* publishes its survey of their astronomical salaries.

Not so long ago, college presidents were revered public figures. At the University of Chicago, the blustery Robert Maynard Hutchins introduced the country to "Great Books" and was eyed as a successor to Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis. At Harvard, James Conant helped found the National Science Foundation, led the cold war debates on nuclear weapons, and advised presidents from Roosevelt to Eisenhower. When Conant phoned FDR, a story goes, he'd tell the White House switchboard: "It's the president calling for Mr. Roosevelt." To head a major university was to bestride the national stage.

Even for lesser lights, the job was the capstone to a distinguished scholarly resume. The mark of Richard Burton's failure in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was that he'd never attain the presidency his father-in-law occupied. Today he probably wouldn't want the job. "It is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and it's virtually impossible to change anything," says Peter Buchanan, president of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the nation's largest nonprofit educational institution. "There's no relaxation whatsoever, no time for thinking, no time for contemplation." Presidents flit from city to city, pressing the flesh for cash—or else they're bogged down in administrative drudgery. Once they served 20-year terms; now they bail out, on average, after less than seven. "I get requests every week to supply names of people who would be good candidates," says Clark Kerr, the 87-year-old former president of the University of California who still studies higher education. "But my list gets shorter all the time. People don't want to do it.... The great man as president has almost completely disappeared."

Why? The question admits no simple answer: As society has changed, so has the special place it once reserved for the university. As universities have become more like other businesses, their presidencies have attracted administrators and fund-raisers more than scholars and visionaries. Although Neil Rudenstine may not typify the college president any more than Harvard typifies the American college, his tenure can serve as a lens for examining what it means to hold the job today.

The first thing it means is not having much to do with the classroom. More than 100 years have passed since Cardinal Newman's vision—a vision of the university as a pastoral haven for study—began to vanish. In the Gilded Age, visionaries such as Harvard's Charles Eliot and Johns Hopkins's Daniel Coit Gilman created graduate schools and erected administrative apparatuses of registrars, deans, and vice presidents—the comprehensive modern universities. No longer just the first among faculty equals, the president drifted from his scholarly moorings. One academic said that, when he'd visit Noah Porter, the president of Yale from 1871 to 1886, he'd find Porter reading Kant; when he visited Porter's successor, Timothy Dwight, he would find him reading the budget.

These days, the president's connection to teaching and learning is often tenuous. A provost generally runs a school's academic affairs and sometimes even over-

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sees tenure decisions. No longer plucked from the faculty's ranks, presidents are likely to have abandoned research at a young age for the managerial fast track, switching from one school to another like journeymen basketball coaches. Nan Keohane, formerly Wellesley's president, jumped to Duke; Texas's Bob Berdahl left for Berkeley; Ohio State's Gordon Ghee carpetbagged to Brown. "You now increasingly find people whose only resume experience is administrative," says Judith Block McLaughlin, who teaches education at Harvard and writes about university presidents. "Places are nervous if they don't have the administrative portfolio."

As academic expertise loses its importance, search committees are also turning to what are euphemistically called "nontraditional" candidates—i.e., candidates without scholarly credentials. In a 1996 report, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the top organization of presidents and trustees, urged trustees to "look beyond the ivy walls to consider leaders whose different kinds of experience fits the particular needs of the institution." This means hiring politicians (Senator David Boren and governors Lamar Alexander and Tom Kean are or were college presidents) and businessmen (Bank of America Vice President Peter McPherson, construction company executive Dick Spangler, and holding-company executive Barry Munitz, to name a few). The pols can work the statehouse for cash or friendly laws while the CEOs bring a devotion to the bottom line. According to the latest American Council for Education survey, only 57 percent of presidents hold a Ph.D., and eleven percent have no degree higher than an M.A.

In this respect, Neil Rudenstine is a throwback and a relief from those who breezily suggest the university should be run like a business. A one-time English scholar who wrote about the sixteenth-century British poet Philip Sidney, he can delight a library committee with his reflections on the history of reading or lace his official reports with quotations from the likes of Henry Adams. "Lee Iacocca did what he did for Chrysler because he was passionate about cars. Neil has done what he has for Harvard because he's passionate about education," says Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice Margaret Marshall, formerly Rudenstine's general counsel and still a booster. Whether personally chairing the ad hoc committee meetings required for every tenure appointment at Harvard (up to 30 a year), or holding student office hours every third week, Rudenstine has admirably resisted the pressures to pull away from academic concerns.

Where Rudenstine resembles the new college president is in his lifelong career as an administrator. After earning a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1964, he taught there for just four years before becoming dean of students at Princeton, his alma mater. He rose to dean of the college, then provost. When Princeton's president, William Bowen, stepped down in 1988, Rudenstine, the heir apparent, passed up the presidency to follow his mentor to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. But, in 1991, Rudenstine accepted Harvard's offer to replace the outgoing Derek Bok.

Some have suggested that, temperamentally, Rudenstine is more like a provost than a president—or that he is better suited to run Princeton's cozy boutique (which has few graduate schools) than Harvard's vast emporium. He has drawn fire for his attention to the academic filigree. "He focused on issues that would be important at a college," says Jerry Green, a professor of economics who in 1994 resigned as Rudenstine's first provost. "Who's the commencement speaker? What degrees do we give?" Green says that Rudenstine dithered on more pragmatic matters, from encouraging professors to retire early to setting guidelines for the patent rights on scientific discoveries.

At the same time, others have criticized Rudenstine for being too much the administrator—for his unwillingness to rock the boat or take stands on public issues. "It's hard to imagine a more visible locale in higher education. But he has not shown leadership," says the eminent Harvard sociologist David Riesman, another scholar of the academic presidency. Rudenstine himself seems to recognize the downside of his administrative career path. Today, he says, "a whole range of issues that university presidents might once have spoken out on are so knowledge-intensive that, unless you want to make a mistake every other word, you'd better watch out what you talk about. Because you will not have your basic facts straight, leave alone the most recent findings."

"People who have some autonomous stature in their disciplines have a better shot at succeeding," says Leon Botstein, the president of Bard, who is also a conductor, musicologist, and all-around public intellectual. A career in scholarship—of taking stands and contending with sharp critics—breeds a different set of attitudes than does administration. "If you cannot command respect on the grounds on which the institution is based, you lose the moral authority of the position," Botstein says. Finding leaders who can claim our attention with their ideas, then, may mean looking again to the ranks of those whose job it is to have them.

"Never retract, never explain. Get it done, and let them howl!" is how Benjamin Jowett, the head of Oxford's Balliol College during the nineteenth century, once described his leadership style. Like strict parenting, the Jowett approach seems newly fashionable. "There is power rolling all over the president's desk, but he doesn't dare pick it up," says John Silber, Boston University's controversial chancellor, who urges presidents to seize control of the university's budget, from which all other decisions flow. In the classroom, too, he says, "there's a lot you can do. If a professor is demonstrably inadequate, for example, you can freeze his salary."

In its 1996 report, the Association of Governing Boards faulted not just faculty but other challengers to a president's power: state politicians, who slash education budgets and grandstand about ending tenure; trustees who "lack a basic understanding of higher edu-

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cation or a significant commitment to it" yet lobby for their pet proposals; alumni who use their financial clout to meddle in curricular and hiring decisions. "The academic presidency," the report concluded, "has become weak."

Like "nice," "weak" is a word people frequently apply to Neil Rudenstine. This is not entirely a bad thing. Rarely high-handed, like Silber or his acolytes, Rudenstine tries to respect the university's newly powerful constituencies. "Neil's style is genuinely consultative," says Harvey Fineberg, Harvard's provost. "He is genuinely interested in what others' views are."

More than one colleague compares Rudenstine to another, more prominent conciliator. "He's like Bill Clinton, only for real," says Sidney Verba, a government professor who has only praise for Rudenstine. "He has an embracing ability, very easy to talk to." "He is very Clintonian," says another senior professor, who does not have only praise for Rudenstine. "He doesn't like sharply defined either-or choices. He wants to be liked by everyone. It's very much, 'I feel your pain.'"

NEIL RUDENSTINE BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The go-along, get-along style has helped Rudenstine, as it has other presidents, weather the '90s battles over political correctness. It's a lesson Rudenstine says he learned from witnessing the damage that some unyielding presidents did to their campuses in the turbulent 1960s. (The episode in 1968 when Columbia University President Grayson Kirk called in the cops to clear out the students who were occupying his office was a critical moment in the decline of the college president.) With their skill at building consensus, presidents such as Rudenstine have managed to keep the peace.

Sometimes, though, this imperative to avoid conflict extends to the president's public role as well, where it can mute his voice and limit his influence. Rudenstine, for one, is aware of the constraints. "I have to think very, very hard about not where I should be positioned, but where Harvard should be positioned," he says. "Because Harvard is as much a red flag—or a crimson flag—these days as it is a symbol of great things. It's the elite, the wealthy, the privileged, the arrogant." He prefers, he says, to work behind the scenes. Explains Alex Huppe of Harvard's public affairs office: "A great frustration I have with Neil is that he's so modest." On a host of issues—from the troubled state of high schools to the tendency to view higher education as a commodity—Rudenstine, like others, has been rather silent. As the late Bart Giamatti, Yale's president in the '80s, wrote, today's parents looking to know what value a college education has "certainly ... will not hear a voice like a Conant or a Hutchins."

Rudenstine has taken a public stand in at least one area: racial diversity. It's a stand he attributes to his own Jewish-Catholic background. He has created, with the literary scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr., the country's preeminent African American Studies department. He also led an effort to defend affirmative action when a series of court rulings started to erode the 1978 *Bakke* Supreme Court decision—which explicitly lauded Harvard's policy of affirmative action without quotas. Rudenstine personally researched the history of Harvard's admissions policy and, in a 62-page footnoted report to Harvard's overseers, argued that the school has always prospered when it embraced excluded groups. And, in 1997, he got a coalition of leading university presidents to endorse a pro-diversity statement that he cowrote and to place an ad in *The New York Times* saying so. A framed copy sits on a side desk in his office.

Yet taking even this seemingly innocuous position—after all, diversity within academia is hardly controversial—has gotten Rudenstine into some trouble; critics have attacked him from both the left and the right. And other presidents are even more cautious. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a group of college presidents rejected a recent White House suggestion that they form a group to promote diversity. An official at the American Council on Education said that the presidents

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preferred to get a "better sense of what the public thinks and knows about diversity in higher education."

This sort of timidity is fairly typical in the face of the growing number and power of the constituencies a president has to serve. "There are more veto groups than there used to be," says Clark Kerr. "Presidents put their heads above the parapet and are shot at. And from more directions, from different groups. Students are more aggressive. All the members of the board think they can call the shots. So you keep your head down." The courage to stick one's head above the parapet, universities seem to have decided, is less important than managerial skill.

That skill has become paramount because of yet another phenomenon that has changed the president's job: the explosion of administration. After World War II, young men (and increasingly women) streamed onto the campuses. The government urged them on, through the G.I. Bill (1944) and the National Defense Education Act (1958), which greatly increased the federal education budget. Then the egalitarian '60s turned higher education from a privilege into a birthright. Universities built relentlessly, adding libraries, institutes, computer centers, area studies programs, black and women's studies programs, professional schools. Administrations metastasized. Officers were now hired for admissions and financial aid, health and psychological services, alcohol counseling and campus security, public relations and legal counsel, sexual harassment and minority affairs, community outreach and real estate.

But with the end of the cold war—and the '90s obsession with balancing budgets—came the end of government largesse. In 1992, for the first time ever, state appropriations for higher education fell; in 1993, they fell again. Because of the Stanford incident, federal research grants can no longer be used to cover operating expenses. Meanwhile, tuition costs have been pushed about as high as students and their parents will abide.

These fiscal straits have ushered in a new era of consolidation. Presidents must keep oiling the administrative machines they've inherited but without the chance to achieve glory through their own enduring projects. The few presidents who are hailed as innovators and beacons to the wider public—Botstein of Bard, the retiring James Freedman of Dartmouth, to name two—tend to run smaller schools. When a major university courted Botstein to become its president, he vowed, to the trustees' horror, to liquidate and spend a third of the endowment. "I said, 'Are you a university or a bank?'" Botstein recalls. "But they're not looking to build the new university for the 21st century. You're supposed to balance the budget, stay out of trouble, make sure the buildings don't fall down."

Hutchins once described the modern university as a series of schools and departments united by a central heating system. At Harvard, one might add, even the heating systems are separate. "Every tub on its own bottom," goes Harvard's slogan: Each of its twelve schools operates as a fiefdom, with its own budget and fundraising—a system far more decentralized than most. Deans of the schools control their own budgets, with Rudenstine overseeing a much smaller pool of resources. Students and professors at each school may have nothing to do with one another.

Rudenstine decided to change this. "When Neil became president, he made it clear that he thought the tubs were too separate and that Harvard was missing collaborative opportunities," says Jeremy Knowles, dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Rudenstine appointed new university-wide officers, including provost and associate provost. He had the various deans present one another with their academic plans for their own schools; these blueprints then served to target priorities in Harvard's first ever university-wide capital campaign. Rudenstine also started a "Project ADAPT" to streamline administrative and financial information across Harvard. And he undertook a series of "interfaculty initiatives" that have united professors from disparate schools to conduct interdisciplinary programs such as environmental studies and "mind, brain, and behavior." Though the changes are somewhat cosmetic—"It's adding another string on Harvard's bow, not throwing out an old model," says Harvey Fineberg—they are widely hailed as Rudenstine's lasting legacy.

Rudenstine argues that the achievements of administration and consolidation—not of vision and expansion—are what the times allow. "It is a moment when the available resources—in terms of the society's sets of priorities—don't point in this direction of building," he says. "Most people say, 'Look, we did a good job between 1945 and 1975 or 1980. We've got three thousand five hundred institutions. We have to make sure that we're good enough. We're not supposed to build another three thousand five hundred, and we're not supposed to make the ones we have twice as big.'... The questions that a university president has to think about and solve these days are rarely the ones that will make headlines."

The dwindling of resources marks the biggest change in the university of late. The financial crisis has also meant that presidents spend more and more of their time raising money. "People within academia look to the president," says Judith McLaughlin, "and say, 'Go out and get that money!'" And presidents are responding: They helped extract from donors a record $14.75 billion in 1996. Once a haphazard operation, fund-raising has been honed to a systematic science of "prospect research" to determine who is likely to give and how much. Presidents spend extra days on the road; golf and tennis games are played in the service of chatting up a prospective donor. Fund-raising now eats up 40 to 60 percent of a president's schedule—and as much as 75 or 80 percent during the increasingly common multi-year capital campaigns to raise hundreds of millions (or in Harvard's case billions) of dollars. Even

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public colleges, which once subsisted on state appropriations, are now chasing private gifts.

This mandate to pull in the money has changed the type of person who becomes a president. "A lot of academics find hitting up donors to be a nasty business," says Clark Kerr. "One has to be a beggar, a flatterer, a sycophant, a court jester," echoes Botstein. Presidential search committees now look on fund-raising as a sine qua non. Increasingly, they turn to candidates who have served as a vice president for "development" or "advancement"—that is to say, raising cash.

Rudenstine's fund-raising talent helped get him hired, and by all accounts he hasn't disappointed. Since he kicked off Harvard's capital campaign on May 12, 1994, he has raised $1.78 billion of his projected $2.1 billion—about $1 million a day. He has reeled in huge gifts; in the last few months alone, *The Crimson* has run headlines celebrating a $21 million gift for a new international center; $17 million for Widener Library; $5 million for the law school.

At the outset of his presidency, Rudenstine chose to postpone the capital campaign a year in order to draw up with his deans a set of plans and goals. The decision was evidently a shrewd one; several schools have already hit their targets. In addition, Rudenstine's personal touch, the time spent with individual donors, has gone a long way toward convincing them that a school with an $11 billion endowment needs more cash. "Neil understands that development is a highly personal task," says Fineberg.

Critical though it is, the disproportionate emphasis that college presidents now place on fund-raising also helps explain their reluctance to take on controversial issues. They simply can't risk alienating donors. But presidents would do well to think about working toward restoring the reputation of higher education *first*—in the hope that increased giving will follow.

Besides, exerting the personal touch can be exhausting. What prompted Rudenstine's leave of absence in 1994 was the time he slept through fund-raising appointments—a piece of symbolism that reporters seized on. Rudenstine acknowledges that the capital campaign pushed him into overdrive. "Knowing that you need to have roughly a third in hand to launch a successful campaign before you announce publicly, that gave me about 30 months to raise—with the help of the development staff and alumni and others—$650 million roughly. And I didn't know anybody, and we were just putting the fund-raising apparatus together, and we didn't yet have an academic plan."

Rudenstine's accommodating style compounded the problem. He logged insane hours, devoted himself to details, and tried to please everyone. "He doesn't like denying anyone," says Knowles. "That spilled over into every group, or faculty, or school, in Harvard and out of Harvard, that invited him to come or to speak or to dine or to meet. He'd say yes. And that was too much. It wasn't humanly sustainable."

In November 1994, during the week before the big football game against Yale, according to one colleague close to him, Rudenstine, who has always had trouble sleeping, hardly slept a wink. The weekend was crammed full of dinners, speaking engagements, and festivities. On Monday night, November 21, following a dinner at the Harvard Club in Boston, Rudenstine took a sleeping pill and slept through his next day's meetings. At that point, says Daniel Tosteson, then the Medical School dean who ministered to Rudenstine, "I urged him in the strongest possible terms to take a holiday." Reluctantly, Rudenstine agreed. Though Harvard honestly explained that the president was "suffering from severe fatigue and exhaustion of unknown origin," the wording of the statement and the university's handling of the news created an air of medical mystery. Tosteson said he would perform a battery of tests, and little further information was disclosed. Speculation abounded. Was Rudenstine depressed? Suicidal? "The doctors didn't know if it was just fatigue, and they didn't want to lie," says Al Carnesale, who took over as acting president and is now the chancellor of UCLA. "We told the truth, which sounded ominous because we were saying we didn't know."

It is easy to take Rudenstine's leave as a cautionary tale, a sign that the president's job, with its cumbersome demands of academic matters and governance, administration, and fund-raising, has grown too big for any one person to handle. At his first press conference after taking over from Rudenstine, Carnesale—who was suddenly serving simultaneously as president, provost, and dean of the Kennedy School—was asked just that. "To which I said, 'It's a very difficult job but no worse than being president of the United States.' How we do it, or try to do it, says as much about each of us as the job itself. Interestingly enough—and it may have been the adrenaline—I found I was energized rather than exhausted."

It's true that all kinds of public heroes—from athletes to politicians—have fallen in the public eye. And it's true, as Kerr says, that "being a college president has never been easy, and it's getting harder." All sorts of pressures are turning it into a CEO's job: fund-raising drives the agenda, and students and parents want their college degrees to get them jobs, not enlightenment. Neil Rudenstine is one of the few who resist this trend toward the commodification of higher education; but he also notes, with resignation, that, without the financial or political support of the wider public, presidents can only do so much.

And yet who is in a better position to dispel this public attitude than the university presidents we once looked to as leaders? Men like Neil Rudenstine are well-suited to keep Harvard, and the nation's other universities, no worse off than when they came in. But, to make their schools better off, to reassert their prominence in an age when the public is cynical and the money is dry—that will require not only their prayers but their energized and purposeful action. •

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"Bear could hardly walk. Then, in just a few days, he was his old self again."

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As a certified therapy dog, Bear has a very important job. Each week, he dispenses good cheer and affection when he visits nursing homes, like the one at Whitney Center in Hamden, Connecticut.

But when he developed arthritis—the same ailment that troubles many of his human friends—his weekly rounds were nearly curtailed.

Luckily for Bear, human disease isn't the only area for which Pfizer searches for cures. Thanks to a treatment made possible by research in veterinary medicine, he was soon up and running again.

And judging from the people who look forward to seeing him, Bear isn't the only one who's feeling better.

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Named for Jesus

The governor of New York secretly grants a convicted (black) murderer a week out of prison so that the convict can persuade his estranged son, a high school basketball star, to enroll in the governor's alma mater.

The convict, installed by police in a fleabag hotel, gets involved with a (white) hooker in the next room and eventually convinces her to abandon her vocation.

The basketball star's first name is Jesus. Gags about the name abound.

Sports agents, crooks, universities deluge the star with offers. He keeps his head. Even when his high school coach offers him $10,000 in cash to sign with certain people, the youth still keeps clean.

His (black) girlfriend is in the pay of a (white) sports agent, who is sleeping with her and who wants to sign up Jesus. The star is enticed for a while but somehow sees through the girl's scheme and breaks loose from her.

At the end, the convict is back in Attica, cheated of the reduction of sentence promised him by the governor. He hurls a basketball over the prison wall and—symbolically of course—it drops in front of his son on a basketball court.

Why should this screenplay, by Spike Lee, be taken with a grain of seriousness? Because **He Got Game** (Buena Vista), which is what it's called, was made by one of the best American directors, Spike Lee. Let's note that, if this screenplay had been written by a white person, then Lee, who is vociferous on the importance of black authenticity for black subjects, might have had something to say about its arrant movieness. (Not to mention its sprawling length and its multiple plot lines.) But director Lee plunged into his work as if writer Lee had given him a sound and sensible script, worthy of his extraordinary talent.

The film texture is rich and cursive, with lovely cinematography by Malik Hassan Sayeed. Lee leads the film along through panning shots that embrace a world, through a shuffling of time planes done like a prestidigitator, through intensities that are gripping even when the text is tawdry. (It's a bit like those nineteenth-century operas that combine tacked-together libretti and sweeping music.) The only missing camera element is what has become the Spike Lee Shot—a character motionless in front of the lens while the background rolls past.

The cast is high-intensity, too. Denzel Washington, who played Malcolm X for Lee, gives the convict a core of quiet under the tensions of the role. But before we start crediting Washington's success to his experience, we must reckon—in one of those recurrent film anomalies—with Ray Allen's performance as Jesus. Many will know that Allen is a star NBA player with the Milwaukee Bucks; Lee has worked the old neo-realist magic with him here, getting a nonactor to maintain a performance. Allen has nothing like Washington's range, but his part has been constructed so that he isn't asked to do anything beyond his reach, and Lee helps him to accomplish it. Beyond that is an element that Lee has preserved: Allen's natural simplicity and honesty—something that is not done merely by shoving a decent person in front of a camera.

Among the many women, black and white, most of whom are lovely, the outstanding performance is in a trite character, the hooker with a heart of gold. Milla Jovovich endows this mannequin with some vitality.

Centrally, of course, the subject of this film is not family or any other relationship. It's basketball. If, like me, you can fairly soon have your fill of watching a ball fall through a hoop, and if the razzle-dazzle on the court fairly soon seems repetitious, and if you are unable to see why Washington, coached for his role, isn't as good as a player as Allen, you can still respond to Lee's patent passion for the game. Besides, to a sports outsider like myself, it seems that basketball has replaced boxing as the way out of and up from poverty. So *He Got Game* has some sociological weight, if not novelty. (Be generous: call it a fictional *Hoop Dreams*.) Lee is a long way from the size and scope of his best film, *Do the Right Thing*, but at least he is working on a subject he cares about and is doing it with polish.

Life of Jesus (Fox Lorber), though it uses that name even more prominently, has even less to do with its namesake. This is the first feature by a French documentarist named Bruno Dumont, who says he wanted to make a contemporary Christian picture "that talks about the love of humanity." He was inspired by Ernest Renan's book of the same title

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Healing by Killing. *A documentary featuring interviews with survivors and perpetrators of the Nazi sterilization and euthanasia program. A small but worthy appendix to* Shoah. *(Reviewed 5/25/98)* **Marius and Jeannette.** *A working-class love story set in Marseilles today but with the atmosphere of a 1930s French film. Some sentimentality but much good sentiment. (5/4/98)* **Wild Man Blues.** *Woody Allen is more interesting than usual in this documentary about his European tour with a jazz band. (5/11/98)* **Wilde.** *The life and trials of Oscar—much of them, anyway. The change in social acceptance of homosexuality in recent years gives the story a new perspective. The cast, especially Stephen Fry as Wilde, is first-class. (5/18/98)*—**SK**

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(coincidentally, the first book I ever read on the subject), but it's difficult to discern any relationship between Dumont and either the Gospels or Renan.

This is one more story, though not much of one, about a group of generally affectless young people whom we have met with different clothes and different names in many parts of the United States and Europe, even in Taiwan. This time we're in Flanders, northern France, in a small town where nothing happens, all the time, especially to young people. We get the feeling that Flanders felt a little hurt at being left out of the Generation X League, and Dumont is making sure the world sees that such youths also exist in his native region.

He has an understated visual style, a skillful taciturnity of the camera and of editing, but it's largely wasted on these dullish young people who loll about or look for facile thrills like so many of their cinematic contemporaries. Fellini dealt with such people, young postwar small-town Italians, in *I Vitelloni* (1953), which obviously doesn't mean that no one else should have touched the subject of that masterpiece; still, it did give subsequent filmmakers a mark to aim at. Fellini's young people antedated the X group, but his film dramatized in advance the subsequent bafflement and wastage. All Dumont does is to make us want to see Fellini again.

And in this work of supposed stark naturalism, an Arab youth in this small town makes a play for the protagonist's girlfriend that, in the racist circumstances, is either insane or suicidal, though it's presented as neither.

This film has one unique element. It's the first one with that name in its title in which one can see explicit sexual intercourse. •

Jed Perl on Art

Being Geniuses Together

One day in November 1945, the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, who had recently arrived in Cambridge to teach at MIT, flew down to New York for the opening of a show of new work by his friend Alexander Calder at the Buchholz Gallery. In a letter to his wife Aino, he reported that after the opening Sandy (as everybody referred to Calder) and "all our old friends gathered at a suburban Italian restaurant." The painter Léger was there, Aalto told Aino, "with a new blonde," along with dozens of other people whom they knew, though Aalto wasn't sure about a lot of the names.

It is wonderful to think of Aalto, Calder, and Léger, three artists who became friends in the furiously experimental '30s, gathered in a family-style Italian restaurant in New York in the year that the war was over. When Aalto left the restaurant at midnight, the party was far from over. And in spirit the party is still going strong more than a half century later. Or at least it was a month ago, when the giddily ecstatic Calder retrospective opened at the National Gallery in Washington while, a short flight north in New York (and Aalto, who was an aficionado of air travel, would definitely have taken the shuttle), Aalto's deliciously complicated elegance filled one floor at the Museum of Modern Art and Léger's modern-age classical wit filled another.

The more I think about the convergence of these three shows, the more I find that they resonate with one another. Aalto met Léger and Calder in the '30s, and from then on they kept turning up in one another's lives. In 1937, Aalto organized a two-man show of their work in the gallery of Artek, the Helsinki company which had been set up to produce Aalto's bentwood furniture. The next year, when Calder had an exhibition in Springfield, Massachusetts, Léger and Aalto were there and gave speeches. Also in 1938, Calder had the first show devoted exclusively to his jewelry at Artek; Maire Gullichsen, who had helped establish Artek and commissioned Aalto's most famous house, the Villa Mairea, seems to have bought more than a few of Calder's fanciful necklaces. In their published writings and in their conversations, Léger and Aalto quote one another and refer to shared experiences. And in the '50s, Calder and Léger encouraged the Parisian art dealer Louis Carré, who represented both of them, to consider "their miraculous friend Aalto" for the commission to design his country house. This house, with its dramatically pitched roof and walls lined with Légers, can be seen in a series of photographs in the Modern's Aalto show.

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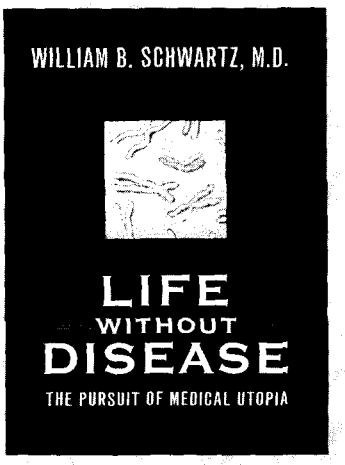

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What brought these men together was much more than a mutual sociability. They shared a similarly open-hearted and easygoing relationship with the grand adventure of modern art, in which they were taking their places not as founders but as second-generation pioneers. Both Aalto and Calder were born in 1898 and died in 1976; and by the time they turned 20, abstract art was an established fact. Léger was born a generation earlier, in 1881, which makes him a contemporary of Picasso and Braque; but his first great paintings, in the bold *Contrast of Forms* series, with their black outlines and swaths of primary color, are second-act Cubism, in that they take Picasso's and Braque's initial discoveries for granted. In much the same way, Aalto came to prominence with some variations on Le Corbusier's and Gropius's International Style, and Calder found himself as a sculptor after a visit to Mondrian's studio.

In the late '20s and early '30s, these three men were princes in the expanding kingdom of modern art. They were all involved in one way or another in the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris, that last, glorious, and desperate stand of interwar optimism. Calder's *Mercury Fountain* was in the Spanish Pavilion, not far from Picasso's *Guernica*. And after the war was over, Calder, Léger, and Aalto found that a new generation was looking to them to bring back some of the old utopian '30s playfulness.

There is no modern furniture more warmly elegant than Aalto's chairs and tables, no vision of modern man more hilariously seductive than what Léger offers in his late construction workers and circus performers, no sculpture more effortlessly lyrical than some of Calder's mobiles of the 1940s. Still, for people who are going this spring to see the work of these tremendous creative spirits, the experience is anything but uncomplicated. These are artists who come on easy, but once they have pulled you in, they turn out to be demanding seducers. That kind of deepening drama is what gives the Calder retrospective at the National Gallery its gathering force. The show, which has been brilliantly organized by Marla Prather, the curator of twentieth-century art at the Gallery, is in Washington until mid-July, and moves to San Francisco in the fall.

Calder is the most resolutely yet slyly American of all American artists, and so he is a terrific choice for a National Gallery show. And the first phase of the retrospective, which is dominated by the caricatural wit of Calder's wire figure sculptures, is great popular entertainment: the perfect thing for Washington's casual museumgoers. The audience responds immediately, unreservedly, and their reactions are right on target.

While Calder's *Circus*, the elaborate miniaturized universe with which he enchanted '20s Paris, no longer leaves the Whitney Museum in New York (where it has just been splendidly reinstalled), the National Gallery does provide a remarkable film of Calder putting his toy performers through their paces.

Courtesy of The National Gallery

ALEXANDER CALDER INSTALLING *INTERNATIONAL MOBILE* AT THE PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, 1949

That nifty film (done by Carlos Vilardebo in 1961), together with the blithely confident hijinks of the early wire sculptures, gives visitors Calder's Rube Goldberg side. It's love at first sight. And why not? People are glad to spend some time with an artist whom they may be inclined to think of as a slightly mad but endearing relative, who dreams up nutty contraptions in the garage.

As the show progresses, however, a lot of museumgoers may fall out of love with Calder. Of course there is a feeling of drift—and plain tiredness—that often comes over visitors in the middle of a long, complicated retrospective; but I think that there is something else going on. Initially, people warm to Calder's audience-friendly humor. After a while, though, they begin to realize that most of his work is resolutely, purely abstract. And here the uneasiness comes in. While Calder is still offering balancing acts and now-you-see-it-now-you-don't magic, this is all expressed in terms of abstract forces and absolutist distillations.

The artist whom visitors first regarded as a wackier version of themselves turns out to be a highbrow: more Mondrian than Rube Goldberg. It may occur to people that Calder wasn't really such an all-American guy; he did, after all, spend half his time in France. The lovable ragamuffin of the early galleries is actually an austere modern. His comedy is more aloof than earthy. A twentieth-century master whom the crowds expected to love unreservedly keeps his distance. That circus of Calder's is an ivory tower, too.

This is not a time when Calder or Aalto or Léger is likely to affect the way we look at art. Their unembarrassed Olympian fun rubs people the wrong way. They are too unambivalent for the '90s; even their ironies are untroubled, and what are we to make of that? Consider the case of Fernand Léger. Even as his taste for the silly kick of kitsch unnerves whatever is left of a tradition-minded audience, his suavely classical compositional gifts make his work look antiquated to the hip crowd that, incredible as it may be, still hasn't wised up to Jeff Koons. Of course, Léger is such an established figure in the history books that museumgoers are unlikely to reject him out of hand. Still, I can't help but feel that in the Modern's retrospective such ebullient paintings as *La Ville*, *Three Women*, *Les Constructeurs*, and *La Grande Parade* are being presented and accepted as position papers in some high-meets-low argument, rather than as the dashingly confident juggling acts that Léger had in mind.

Carolyn Lanchner, curator in the Modern's Department of Painting and Sculpture, who organized the show, is partly to blame. While she writes convincingly in a catalogue essay about Léger's casually varied paint handling, her installation never establishes the rhythmic flow from painting to painting that would pull us into Léger's world. The total exclusion of Léger's pre-Cubist landscapes robs the show of a real beginning. And Lanchner presents enthralling summing-up works such as *La Ville* and *Three Women*

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in cramped quarters, so that there's no sense of occasion, not to mention any space to look at them. Lanchner has squandered valuable square footage on oversized marginal works, such as the wanly ornamental *Composition with Two Parrots*, which is nearly sixteen feet wide and gobbles up the biggest room. (A much smaller retrospective mounted at the Albright-Knox in Buffalo in 1982 was truer to Léger's spirit.)

Lanchner includes none of the poignantly lovely classical landscapes of the '20s. Her selection feels like a recitation of Léger's concerns. Lanchner shows us the influence of the movies; she shows us Léger the Surrealist. What's missing is Léger's awesomely confident mood. I didn't feel the full force of Léger's color, which, once he hits his stride in 1913, gives the work a sure, buoyant tone straight through to the end, some forty years later.

Surely visitors want to be seduced by that exhilarating color of Léger's. There is no other artist who knows how to set off the boldest blues and reds and greens against soft platinum grays. Those orchestrations are heavenly. But a sociological scourge lurks in the minds of a lot of museumgoers, and that devil tells people that they should be skeptical about Léger. Just as they are falling head over heels in love with the flamboyance of the *Three Women*, that puritanical demon may start them wondering why they're getting such a charge out of these sheet-metal babes. Right-thinking people may worry that they are quite so amused by paintings that have such machine-age subject matter, so many robotic or pneumatic or paper-doll figures. The question is an old one, considering that Léger, already in the early '20s, was explaining that "the mechanical element, like everything else, *is only a means, not an end.*"

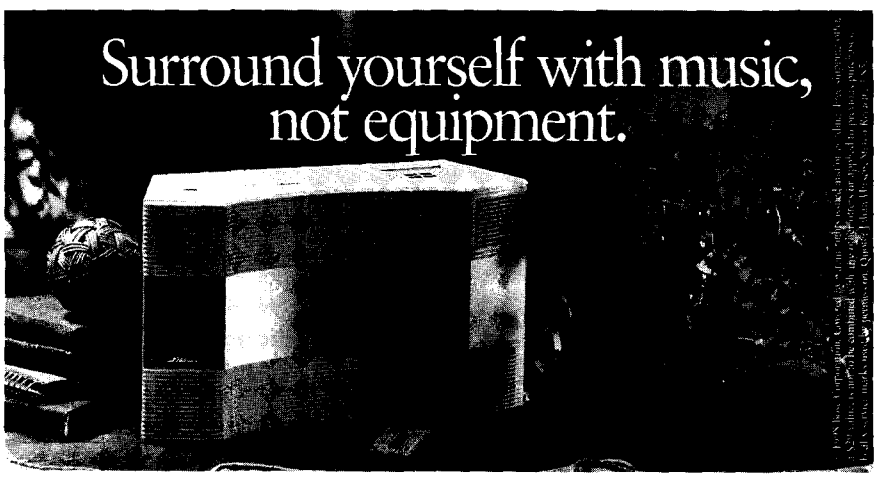
Léger wants us to understand that he is a visual poet who is enthralled with popular subjects, not a social theorist or critic. He loves to give pop themes a magisterial, classicizing aura: it's that simple. Yet even though his sense of fun is infectious, people have a hard time accepting this imaginative freedom, probably because we are living at a time when art that deals with popular culture is generally left to p.c.-bookkeeping minds. Of course, Léger also lived in a period of socially correct thinking. He was an ardent leftist and a member of the Communist Party in France after World War II. Before everything else, however, he cared for visual poetry, and to those on the left who would impose open-and-shut interpretations on his work he struggled to explain that he regarded mechanical forms metaphorically.

Léger speaks of wanting to create "the equivalent of the 'beautiful object' sometimes produced by modern industry." He is not saying that a beautiful woman is a machine. He is saying that the sleekness of a machine is exciting—and so is the human body. Indeed, he is going farther, and arguing that the unity of a machine and the unity of a masterpiece by Poussin are not totally different. "A picture organized, orchestrated, like a musical score," he wrote, "has geometric necessities exactly the same as those of every objective human creation (commercial or industrial achievement)."

Léger has ideas, but he organizes them intuitively. So do Aalto and Calder. All three artists suggest a particularly between-the-wars view of the unity of tradition and innovation, of high style and everyday experience. There is a glamour, an éclat, a utopia-now craziness to their elegant syntheses. They have already seen the black downside of modern civilization in World War I; Léger had been in the trenches. And so they are skeptical, but in an imaginative way that enables them to reshape their skepticism as intuitive freedom.

An architect who studied with Aalto at MIT in the '40s recalled that he was "very much an intuitive architect.... He did not like to discuss architecture on any abstract or theoretical basis.... The whole idea was to cultivate the 'eye' for form, there is no method for this." Aalto—and Léger and Calder—use older, artisan-like sensibilities to interpret the modern world. Yes, Léger is interested in the peculiar impersonality of the machine, but he is also enamored of the neoclassical tradition that runs from Poussin to David. His big paintings are at least as much about the old-fashioned splendiferousness of French painting as they are about the wonders of the assembly line.

Calder uses ordinary materials to create out-of-this-world effects, and the National Gallery show beautifully catches this exciting metamorphosis. This is a big show, but each light-filled room is so packed with beguiling compositions that I could happily have seen it go on longer. Calder first went to Paris in 1926. In 1930 he saw Mondrian's studio, and from then on he was unstoppable. The idea that sculpture might move—and thereby in some way conquer the fourth dimension—had been swirling around in avant-garde circles even before Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, in their 1920 "Realistic Manifesto," announced that "kinetic rhythms" would have an essential place in the new art. Calder brought to that grand experimental spirit such a nothing-to-it, fast-forward ease that we are sometimes in danger of forgetting how unique an artist he is. He is the only sculptor who gives kinetic art a boundless lyricism.



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In recent decades, Calder's unabashedly experimental work of the '30s has often been reckoned a more formidable achievement than his best-known mobiles of the '40s and '50s. In those early years, Calder used herky-jerky mechanical structures and unequivocally rectilinear and circular forms to create enchanted, toy-like variations on themes that he had first seen in the art of Mondrian and Miró. These works have the aura of mad-cap cosmological fantasies; Calder's circular configurations evoke astronomical models, while his proscenium rectangles, framing intergalactic encounters, suggest a plainspoken absurdist theatricality.

Calder's work of the '30s is bursting with promise; I think that's what people respond to. These constructions reflect a young man's can-do ingenuity, but considering that they are supposed to be about movement, they don't have much flow. Often they are little more than three-dimensional realizations of other artists' ideas. And when they do actually move, the movement is awkward. For all its freshness and its insouciance, I don't think this work can compare with the unfurling drama that Calder first achieved in the mobiles of the '40s. Their swooping-diving-soaring forms easily—triumphantly—command a space.

Calder gives his metal-and-wire mobiles a seductively naturalistic flow. His mechanisms are keyed to the infinitely subtle dynamics of the air. There is something almost da Vincian in the way that Calder hitches his mobiles to the ineffable—to the mysteries of air currents and gravitational pull. His greatest mobiles, with their lilting, meandering progress and their astounding asymmetries, have a rococo fascination. I'm thinking of the black cascade of *S-Shaped Vine* (1946), the twinkling whiteness of the immense *International Mobile* (1949), the spiny redness of *Sumac II* (1952), and the unity in diversity of *Black: Flower and Seventeen* (1959). These are peerlessly carefree works. Calder's forms—those boomerangs and wing shapes and stylized flowers—are beautifully worked out; but his subject is not form, it is what air does to form.

Marla Prather's installation of the work from the '40s and '50s has been inspired by the profusion of forms that we see in photographs of Calder's Roxbury, Connecticut, studio; and she also evokes museum installations that were done while Calder was alive. Prather overlaps the mobiles, so that initially you take them in as a gaggle of undifferentiated elements—a sort of mechanical hanging garden. While the air in the galleries is stiller than one would like, there is some movement, and the play of shadows on the walls is something to behold. As you linger, you begin to pick out particular favorites. Even if the crowding suggests a slight downgrading of this work, at least compared to the way that Prather has handled the earlier galleries, it's a lovely installation.

I have only a few regrets about the show. Prather includes paintings and drawings, but she doesn't give space to the delicate side of Calder's draftsmanship, to small works such as a witty portrait of Sartre, with the smoke from his cigarette spelling his name, or the sketches of the mobiles and stabiles that Calder created for the catalogues of his shows in the '40s and '50s, thereby turning these pamphlets into precious little illustrated books. Prather includes some of Calder's jewelry, but I would have liked to see a selection of his household objects, too. As for the work of the '60s and '70s, we could have used more guidance than Prather gives. It would be an understatement to say that the gargantuan structures of those years—including the large mobile in the East Wing of the National Gallery—are among Calder's less inspired works, but I think that the selection of late stabiles could have been better.

Yet these are minor complaints. The show has a glinting beauty that holds in the mind. This is the most grandly light-hearted museumgoing experience of recent years. In the gentle yet precipitous arabesques of the Calder mobiles, you feel the freedom that comes when an artist knows how to play with the horizontal of the earth, the vertical of everything that rises heavenward, and the gravitational pull that brings it all back down. Calder dances around those basics; it is his way of saluting them.

Aalto and Léger have their own teasingly loving relationships with the fundamentals. Léger doesn't limit himself to the primaries, as Mondrian did. Even in paintings that are essentially red, yellow, and blue, he will permit himself a little vacation and add a bit of green or orange. This is Léger's humorous way of showing his muscle. And while Aalto first came to prominence with a number of buildings in the back-to-essentials International Style of Le Corbusier and Gropius, he gave those impersonal forms a quirky warmth. He regarded rectilinearity as one possibility in a vast democracy of possibilities.

No exhibition in recent memory has represented a confidently undogmatic modern spirit with such deep understanding as the Aalto retrospective that Peter Reed, associate curator in the Modern's Department of Architecture and Design, mounted this winter. Aalto has

Honest Iago

If ever I did dream of such a matter,
Abhor me. And remember, I know my place.
In following him, I follow but myself.
All I want to do is help.

I'd rather have the tongue cut from my mouth
Than speak against my friend. This crack of love
Will grow stronger than it ever was before.
There's reason to cool our raging, no?

I cannot think he means to do you any harm.
The chemotherapy seems promising.
These latest figures will show you what I mean.
All I want to do is help.

I had not thought he was acquainted with her.
Yes, yes, this boxcar is returning to Poland.
Sure, I've already tested negative twice.
I am bound to every act of duty.

Your sins are forgiven. This is only a phase.
I could swear it was her handkerchief I saw.
Trust me. Everything is under control.
All I want to do is help.

J. D. McClatchy

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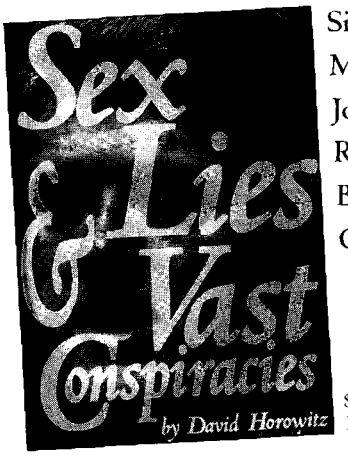
been admired at the Modern for more than half a century—the first book devoted to his work was the catalogue of MoMA's 1938 show—and Reed has built on that institutional history with an optimism that many of us had feared was no longer possible at the Museum of Modern Art. Without slipping into postmodern polemics or ironic nostalgia, he has honored one of the museum's old favorites even as he has demonstrated why that achievement is still urgently appealing all these years later.

Architecture exhibitions are always difficult to do, and with Aalto, the majority of whose work is in Finland (after World War II he also worked in Germany a good deal), the task of giving American audiences a feeling for the achievement may seem impossible. Yet this is exactly what Reed has done. Aalto's marvelous drawings are one of the wonders of this show. These, together with plans, photographs, architectural models, furniture, glassware, full-scale mockups of architectural details, and some very impressive video walk-throughs of major projects, leave you with a strong feeling for the atmosphere of this greatest of Finnish artists.

The show is magnificently laid out. Aalto is the most mysterious of all the major architects, and Reed's installation is true to the unprepossessing way that he weaves his enfolding spell. I think that what first strikes a visitor to Aalto's buildings is the elegant refinement of individual parts—the way blue tile is arranged on a wall, or the wavelike rhythms of a wooden ceiling. Aalto always gives you a lot to look at, but initially you may feel that many of these impressions—your reaction to the ceiling, the windows, the hardware—are discrete and unrelated. Only as I go from part to part to part do affinities and relationships emerge. The impressions begin to add up without my realizing that I'm doing the addition. After a time I feel that the building has been growing up—blossoming—around me, and in my mind, too.

I have never been to Finland, but the Baker dormitory at MIT, a key work of the '40s, is enough to give a firsthand feeling for Aalto's magic, though a lot of the original details are lost or in a down-at-the-heels state. What may initially seem like just another red brick Cambridge building has many different moods. There is the intimacy of the entrance, with its doors pierced by port holes. Not far inside, a fireplace with a wide, raised hearth suggests the welcoming vision of a living room in a friend's house. Then there is the dining hall, with slim horizontal windows that turn the views of the Charles River into an unfolding Japanese



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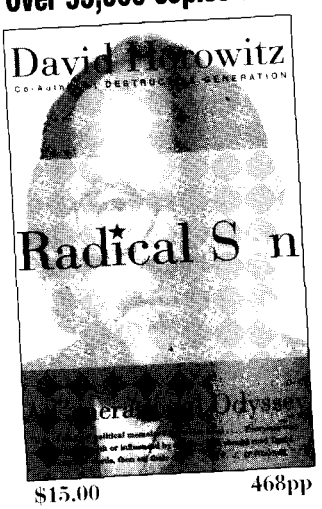

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scroll; and the dining room's grandly miniaturized staircase and wonderful skylights. Even if you can't see the dorm rooms upstairs—almost of all of which have eccentric floor plans and magnificent river views, though most of the original Aalto furniture is gone—you can still enjoy the idiosyncratically meandering halls.

Back outside, the building makes several different impressions, depending on which side you see. The façade on the campus side, with two angular staircases rising in a v-shape from the entrance, is a bit fortress-like. Facing the river, Baker House becomes curvaceous, meandering—a mirror of the waterway. And then there are the short ends of the dorm, which are almost comically abbreviated. Later on, if you catch a sight of Baker from across the Charles, what will impress you is the astonishing forceful chiaroscuro shadowplay of the winding façade; you're unaware of it up close.

Aalto's buildings don't leave you feeling overwhelmed, or spoiled for other architecture, the way, say, some of Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpieces do. Léger once wrote of Calder that "he uses all these elements scattered throughout our daily life.... He has amalgamated and coordinated everything." Léger might have said that about Aalto, too. Aalto gives us a heightened admiration for ordinary materials—for red brick and inexpensive wood. His buildings reflect the sensibility of a man who must have looked at the most modest houses and streetscapes and seen details and elements that delighted him, that he figured he could bring into his subtlest compositions.

It has often been observed that the Villa Mairea, in which Aalto used a great variety of materials—different woods and stone and brick and tile and stucco—achieves an effect akin to Cubist collage. I think that's right. The subtle unity of Aalto's buildings is not unlike the unity of the greatest collages that Picasso and Braque did before World War I. Even as the artist is achieving an overarching flow, the elements that go into the composition retain their individuality. There is a Cubist transparency to Aalto's method—a sense of order so sure that it needn't be insisted upon.

Peter Reed has called his exhibition "Between Humanism and Materialism," and what he has done is to remind the architectural profession, which is wracked with ideological strife, of an architect who regarded the analytical process as a sensuous experience. I find it interesting that Aalto was such an inspired designer of libraries, both public and private. He obviously responded immediately, intuitively, to the physical beauty of books, which give mental processes a mysteriously encoded concrete form.

In the years when Aalto was a young man, both a self-consciously Northern romanticism and a stripped-down classicism were powerful forces in Scandinavian architectural circles, and although early on Aalto was a neoclassicist, it is obvious that he took from everywhere and everybody. His first Modern show, in 1938, featured the bentwood furniture that was his inspired—and humanized—variation on Marcel Breuer's tubular metal furniture. Aalto was not a man who believed that the new wiped away the old. While teaching at MIT, he took his students into Boston to look at the work of Charles Bulfinch, an American classicist who designed the Massachusetts State House in the late eighteenth century.

A part of what Aalto shared with Calder and Léger was a genius for being lucidly romantic about modern experience. They were gambling that the excitement of modern style might bring a new audience to art. But if they were optimistic about this, they were by no means naïve. Around 1950, Aalto tried to persuade the town of Säynätsalo to include a painting by Léger in the council chamber of the Town Hall that he was designing, but he was rebuffed. Still, Aalto and Léger hoped that popular taste might expand.

In the '50s, when Léger wrote several essays about the use of color in architecture, he recalled a visit he had made with Aalto to some housing that Aalto had designed for workers and engineers. (I suppose this was the Sunila Pulp Mill complex, which was owned by the Gullichsen family.) Aalto had painted the walls in strong colors, and Léger wrote that "our fine gentlemen, the engineers, put up wallpaper with parakeets while the workers didn't touch anything (of course, perhaps they didn't dare to)." Léger wanted to argue that the architecture had a positive effect on the working man. He theorized that "the influence of color and light affected [the workers]; their clothing was better cared for." And he quoted Aalto as saying, "All in all, the people aren't bad."

All of this can be dismissed as one more episode in the twentieth-century intellectual's misbegotten romance with the common man. Of course that is a part of the truth; but when Léger mused that the workers might not have changed anything because "they didn't dare," he showed that he had a sense of humor about his hopes. These artists knew that their love affair with the public was a crazy gamble. They were up-for-anything spirits who realized that in order to expand taste they would have to go out and prove to the public that the modern style, when presented with wit, elegance, and agility, was a magnificent spectacle.

This, no doubt, was why the idea of the circus performer held such a fascination for them. Calder had established himself in Paris with his playfully miniaturized jugglers and acrobats. Léger's career closed with the same theme. In a series of autobiographical conversations, Calder recalled that when Maire Gullichsen took him to see Aalto's pulp mill at Sunila, the "great wheels in pairs, rolling on paper pulp in vats ... looked like circus elephants doing a stunt." I do not think Aalto would have disliked the analogy.

These three men wanted to be ringmasters in the modern circus. They were uncomfortable with the conventional boundaries between the arts. Aalto painted and did bentwood sculptures; Léger was fascinated with architectural decoration; Calder's mobiles and stabiles sometimes approach the size of small buildings. Late in life, Aalto was asked by an interviewer what he thought about the relationship between architecture, painting, and sculpture, and he responded by quoting Léger's thought that "the arts form an orchestra, which the architect conducts." Yet Aalto was also skeptical about collaboration, saying that "I ... think it better if three artists are hidden in one person," which would be possible, since "the three art forms of architecture, painting, and sculpture are linked to one another in that they are all manifestations of the human spirit based on *materia*"—on the concreteness of materials.

These modern friends wanted to create paradisal visions out of what Aalto referred to as the artist's confrontation with materiality. And that is precisely what you see them doing in the shows this season: in the ecstatic carnival spirit of Léger's *Grande Parade*, in the scintillating red-hot vision of Calder's *Sumac II*, and in the heavenly blue-and-white interior of Aalto's Essen Opera House. Despite some very impressive attendance figures, however, none of these retrospectives has been an unequivocal hit with the museumgoing public. I would not conclude from this that people are unsympathetic or unwilling to respond. To the contrary, museumgoers feel the tug of these visionary artists even when they don't know quite what to make of them. My guess is that people are feeling a bit bewildered as they leave these shows. For our postmodern know-it-alls are realizing that they have not yet fully grasped what modern is. •

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The Master of the Not Quite

By James Wood

Doctor Faustus
by Thomas Mann
translated by John E. Woods

(Knopf, 534 pp., $35)

Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann, 1900-1949
edited and with an introduction by Hans Wysling
translated by Don Reneau

(University of California Press, 444 pp., $50)

I.

Too often Thomas Mann is credited with everything except being a novelist, rather as Goethe is credited with everything except being a poet. This is partly because such writers are their own Eckermanns, always offering the shoulder of their own criticism to the emotions of their own art. In such writers the prosaic is a kind of lyricism in disguise; but then undisguised lyricism may appear invisible. Has not Mann's novelistic lyricism become invisible? Mann is accused of "superessayism" (by Nabokov and others). He is read in ideational uniform, as if his work were the inevitable treaty to the war of nineteenth-century German philosophy, a document badged with heavy subheadings: "Nature," "Spirit," "Aesthetics," "Time," "Death." Even those sympathetic to the novelistic textures of Mann are likely to argue—as Richard Blackmur did—that Mann's novels are full of parody because the great contemporary writers are incapable of creating whole characters and unwilling to resort to type.

Mann was comprehensively anxious about the quality of the novelistic in his work. He feared that there was too much *Kritik* and not enough *Plastik*. Unlike a natural genius, his way was a burgherly crawl, and he was defensive about its jowelly merits: "the modern approach, minuteness, accumulation of details, lack of genius, intellectuality, allied with tenacity, work, endurance of will, can successfully go in for ambitious tasks." His novel *Doctor Faustus*, he lamented, is "joylessly earnest, not artistically happy."

There is a pathos to the image of Mann "reading with a pencil," as he put it, consuming hundreds of books as preparation for his novels, patiently cleaning his errors, slowly building the beautiful contraption of truth. There he sits in his study, whose implacably closing door was acutely remembered by his children, his beloved cigar with its slow ash the very emblem of gradualism, his unlovely face exactly adequate to the deliberate task in hand, his moustache like a bourgeois underlining, like an emphasis—and there he writes his great fiction, slowly, thoroughly, but also thoroughly anxiously, fiction about which someone once said to him, at a reading: "What I admire about your work is that I always feel that it is the best you could possibly have done." In his *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, Mann said that this comment made him happier than almost any other.

"Only thoroughness can be truly entertaining," Mann observes at the beginning of *The Magic Mountain*. That thoroughness is held against him by some, or is not credited as entertainment by others who do not hold it against him; but thoroughness is exactly what is most novelistic about Mann. It is the key to both his grandeur and his delicacy as a novelist; it is the fine entertainment of his work. Its thoroughness, its length and repetitive quizzicality, is what allows us to feel that we are living within a cosmos of ideas, that ideas are heavily mobile rather than busily static. The thoroughness of Mann's fiction is not business or busyness, but *labor*—and therefore not bourgeois, despite Mann's claims. This labor is aesthetic and metaphysical. The writer, in his thoroughness, discovers abysses, he breaks through to sadness and to death, he does not turn away.

This anti-bourgeois principle is surreptitiously announced in Mann's first novel, *Buddenbrooks*. In this story of three generations of a family, several failed artists appear. One of them, Christian, is especially failed. He has not done much with his life, except sit in London theaters and take the bohemian air. He is sickly. He tells stories that are always too long, and slightly feverish. His sister Toni complains that "he goes so unnaturally into detail.... He looks at things in such a strange way." His brother Thomas, who is striving to be the perfect bourgeois, agrees: "It is just the way people speak in a fever." But much earlier in the novel, that word "strange" has been linked with death. When Johann Buddenbrook, the original patriarch, dies, his last word is "Strange!" and Mann writes that "the family looked in each other's eyes and saw there something strange. It was the idea of death...."

Christian's strangeness is that he sees death, not only because he is sickly and useless, but also because he has some distant quality of the artist: he "goes so unnaturally into detail." He opposes the bourgeois world, whose motto might be the repeated cry of Christian's mother, the Frau Consul, who likes to close arguments with: "*Asse*!" One sees here how thorough Mann is about thoroughness, and how novelistic, allowing that word "strange" to revisit the narrative after years and pages away.

Similarly, Mann leans novelistically, not allegorically, on the idea that Christian might be an artist. He may have a small aspect of the artistic, but he is easily representative of nothing, because his illness and his failure are his own. He lacks the healthiness of the author's spokesman; and indeed, Mann's fiction lacks the healthiness of allegory. It, too, goes "unnaturally into detail"; and in admitting death into its form, it risks becoming its own patient. Mann's fiction is, in both senses, desperately patient.

But this thoroughness is not just metaphysical labor. It has a childlike quality: the artist's persistent simplicity. The child is always unsatisfied with the pristine, and is a playful inquisitor. Mann's reputation is so hidebound—his first English translator called him "Dr. Mann" until Mann's death—that "childlike" seems an impossible charge. But in fact his fiction is full of children. In *Buddenbrooks*, both little Toni and little Hanno are beautifully seen in their childishness, and neither is allowed to enter adulthood: Toni never really grows up, and Hanno dies as an adolescent. Aschenbach, in *Death in Venice*, is seeking many things, but one of them is little Tadzio's innocence. His adulthood is consumed by this quest. Felix Krull is a wicked child, and Adrian Leverkühn, the diabolic composer in *Doctor Faustus*, is an inspired and dangerous child, who plays games with what he calls "the

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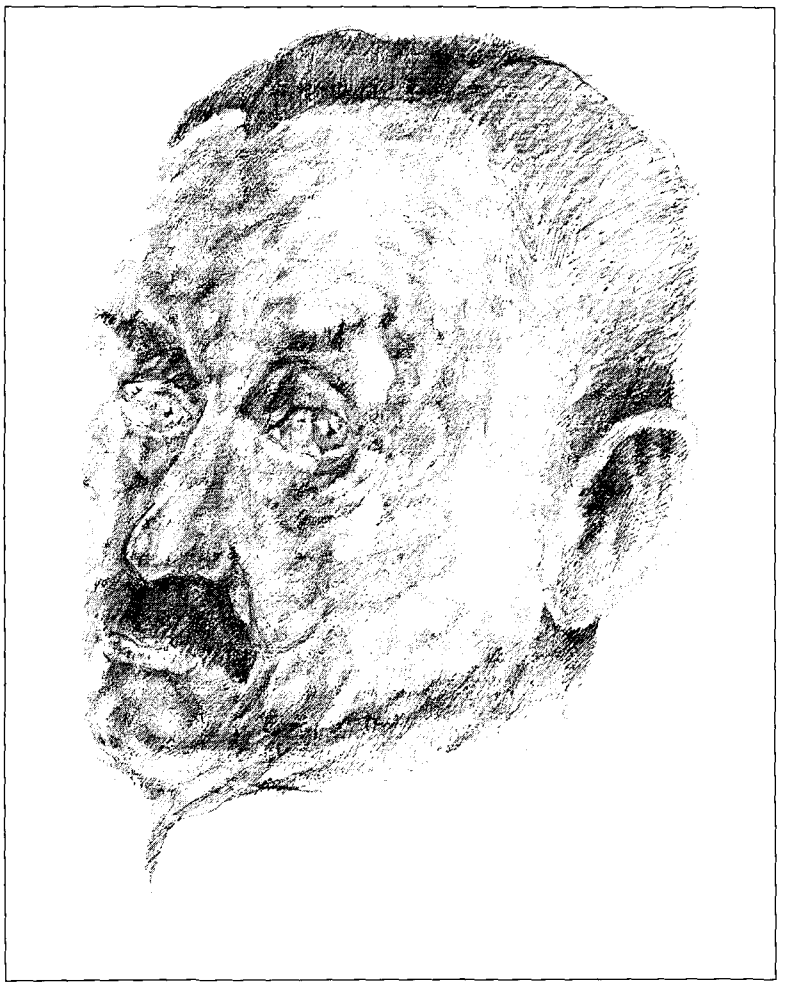
world." And what does the knowing, pompous, freedom-loving, thoroughly adult Settembrini call Hans Castorp, the hero of *The Magic Mountain*? "One of life's problem children."

Mann, too, is one of life's problem children, and like Hans, he was always educating himself, and making his novels the report of that education. The child examines, and is then examined: this is the banal dialectic of childhood, and it is the profound dialectic of Mann's fiction. Mann's childlikeness is seen in the simple life of much of his fiction, its relish for novel detail. Much of this detail is childishly comical. In this he is akin to Tolstoy and Chekhov, about whom he wrote appreciative essays. One thinks of Frau Stöhr in *The Magic Mountain*, who boasts of being able to make twenty-eight different sauces for fish; or the dentist in *Buddenbrooks*, who keeps a parrot called Josephus that tells patients to sit down and wait; or the ridiculous Herr von Gleichen-Russwurm in *Doctor Faustus*, who is memorable only for being "Schiller's great-grandson."



THOMAS MANN BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But simplicity is always nervous in Mann; childlikeness is always artistic. His novels offer, again and again, images of separation that connect childishness, sickness, and the artist. Mann sees the great, necessary, selfish convalescence that is the patient's and the artist's labor. These motifs appear everywhere in his work. In *Buddenbrooks*, Toni, now a young woman, meets Morten Schwarzkopf, a radical young man. The two are at the beach, and Morten, the young radical, refuses to join Toni's glamorous and high-born friends. Instead, he "sits on the rocks." The phrase is taken up by the two, and appears later in the novel. Toni's brother Thomas, the perfect burgher, is perfect only until he begins to question if he is a natural man, or is only really playing a role. He begins to think of the world as "*dehors*," "outside," and his grooming becomes decadently fastidious. The inhabitants of the sanatorium in *The Magic Mountain* think of the real world as "the flatland" or "the plains," "with a gentle but clear trace of contempt." One of the novel's repeated images is "sitting out" or "living horizontally," which refers to the regular rest-cure which the sanatorium's patients take. They wrap themselves in a blanket, and sit out on the terrace. Hans falls in love with "living horizontally." Here he does much of his reading. He calls these sessions "playing king," which recalls a childhood game of his, in which he would imagine himself looking upon the world from above.

"Sitting on the rocks," "*dehors*," "playing king": these are approximations of a radical separateness, which is the artist's inexorable separation. Yet if the artist must be both patient and a patient, then the artist can become very sick—and not simply run the permanent high fever of an artistic life, but actually become diseased. This is the danger of patience, which Mann would come to see acutely in "the world," with the rise of Nazism.

But of course his fiction had anticipated this. He is always the novelist; his politics is merely the slow-witted, belated reader of his novels. In *The Magic Mountain*, Hans, Settembrini, and the sinister Herr Naphta are all, in a sense, "playing king" on their Mount Olympus. They do not imagine that their wild discussions about freedom and religion, about time and torture, have consequences. The novel's vision of a civilization in sickness, about to burst into the First World War, suggests differently. *Doctor Faustus* is explicit, perhaps too explicit, in its allegorical message about the childish irresponsibility of the artist.

The necessity of artistic childlikeness and the danger of it are held together in Mann's work. This is what allows him, in his essay "Sufferings and Greatness of Richard Wagner," to write, on the one hand: "Innocent may be the last adjective to apply to art; but the artist, he is innocent." And to write, on the other hand, in the same essay, this beautiful passage: "To the artist new experiences of 'truth' are new incentives to the game, new possibilities of expression, no more. He believes in them, he takes them seriously, just so far as he needs to in order to give them the fullest and profoundest expression. In all that he is very serious, serious even to tears—but yet *not quite*—and by consequence, not at all. His artistic seriousness is of an absolute nature, it is 'dead-earnest playing.'" Art is, in fact, "playing king"; it is guilty innocence, innocent guilt.

II.

It is the delicacy of the dialectic in Thomas Mann's fiction that justifies it so finely as fiction. It is a delicacy that is the result of an immense thoroughness, as the delicacy of tiredness is the result of hard work. Truth, or rather the idea of a single overbearing truth, is exhausted into fragility by Mann. The ceaseless motion, back and forth, what Hegel called the "labor of the negative," is shown to find its perfect form not in philosophy, but in the novel.

Literature has always prided itself on inventing the dialectic; it baptized it as "negative capability." But the novel, I think, offers an intensification, because the dialectic is implicit in the very idea of sympathy, which is peculiarly the novel's gentle calling. Free characters demand sympathy, and a sympathy that

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is extended only to obedient or likeable characters is not worth having. Real sympathy is the benign sentence handed down to those who do not deserve it. Each tests the other.

Sympathy, then, is a strong image of the dialectic, whereby each side completes the other, and is constantly moving between each other. And we know that the novel is the real home of this sympathy precisely because it routinely demands from us a sympathy that we could not possibly want to extend, in real life, to real people—to murderers, to bores. The novel is able to test, and to enrich, our powers of sympathy in this way, because it is real and it is not real. Or, in Mann's terms, because it is absolutely serious and it is *not quite* serious. It is true, and a game—a true game, but still not life. Which is why we can allow our ideas of things to remain unresolved in fiction as we rarely do in real life.

Though Mann never made an argument like this for the novel, he certainly made an argument for literature's sympathetic interminability, its solving irresolution. In his essay "Goethe and Tolstoy," written in 1922, he suggested that the "artistic principle" is "reserve." In music, he said, we recognize it as "the painful pleasure of the prolonged note, the teasing melancholy of the not-yet...." And "in the intellectual sphere we love it as irony: that irony that glances at both sides ... and is in no great haste to take sides and come to decisions...."

Mann continues that "the real goal to reach is not decision, but harmony, accord. And harmony, in a matter of eternal contraries, may lie in infinity; yet that playful reserve called irony carries it within itself, as the sustained note carries the resolution." One notes here that Mann speaks not of the novel, but only of "the intellectual sphere." Yet his greatest novel, *The Magic Mountain*, which was to appear only two years later, makes the novel's own case for the novel.

This is the great book of the sustained, Mahlerian note. (Mahler's music, though Mann did not especially enjoy it, is the true brother of Mann's fiction.) It is in *The Magic Mountain* that Hans Castorp decides, very beautifully, that "man is the master of contradictions." The novel's very form is thus a confession, an apologia, as was "Goethe and Tolstoy," for Mann's intellectual behavior during the years of the First World War, when he put his prominent support behind Germany's war effort.

For during the war, Mann had sounded like a tyrant of one position—as had his brother Heinrich, except that his brother was right. In an essay on Zola, written in 1915, Heinrich attacked those writers and intellectuals whose writings, and whose lack of political commitment

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Richard Poirier (Rutgers Univ.): "Emerson: 'Are they 'my' poor?' "

Margery Sabin (Wellesley College): "Anecdote and Argument in British Writing about India."

Philip Horne (Univ. of London): "Critical Correspondences: James and his Confrères."

4:30-5:30 Poetry Reading by **Geoffrey Hill** from his forthcoming book.

5:30-7:00 Reception, with address by President **Eleanor Cook**.

Saturday, 3 October

9:00-12:00 ***The Language of Poetry and the Language of the State.*** Chair: **Michael Putnam** (Brown Univ.)

Geoffrey Hill (Boston Univ.): "Language, Suffering, and Silence."

Sarah Spence (Univ. of Georgia): "Caesar and Caesuras: The Poetics of Empire in Vergil and the *Aeneid*."

John Peck: "Sacrifice and Poetics: a Half-Forgotten Answer to the State."

2:00-5:00 ***Proust.*** Chair: **Jean-Louis Major** (Univ. of Ottawa)

Richard Howard (Columbia Univ.): "Proust and Music."

Roger Shattuck (Boston Univ.): "Sheer Length."

Christie McDonald (Harvard Univ.): "Anxiety and the Gift of Art."

8:00 Banquet, and **Margaret Atwood**: "Negotiating with the Dead."

Sunday, 4 October

9:00-11:00 ***Varieties of Dramatic Performance: Mask, Gesture, Language.*** Chair: **Stephen Scully** (Boston Univ.)

Peter Burian (Duke Univ.): "What Makes Greek Drama Dramatic: Movement, Gesture, and Word in Greek Tragic Theater."

Frank Hoff (Univ. of Toronto): "Perspectives on Acting and Actor's Training: Zeami, Kanze Hisao, Eugenio Barba, Suzuki Tadashi."

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to democracy and freedom, had encouraged Germany's tyrannical slide into war. Such writers—and Heinrich made private allusions in this essay to his brother—had "betrayed Mind, betrayed Man." Writers such as Thomas were "intellectual time-servers." The real artist did not, like Thomas, have a "false profundity," a fastidious isolation from politics. The real artist, according to Heinrich Mann, "recognizes spiritual quality only where some moral effect has been achieved." Nietzsche, in Heinrich's view, had served only his spirit, not the spirit of Man.

Heinrich and Thomas, as this finely edited volume of their letters makes clear, were much closer politically than either suspected. In 1910, Thomas had written in a notebook that his own generation was influenced by "Nietzsche militant," whereas the younger generation (the warmongers) was influenced by "Nietzsche triumphant." What separated them, and would always separate them long after they were reconciled, long after their politics were so similar that Heinrich could joke that Thomas was "just a little more radical than I," was the very different ideas they held about art. Heinrich's loud, simplifying, cinematic novels were commandeered by politics, and Thomas had, as a younger man, attacked their "farcical" nature, their "crudity" and "sentimentalism."

Thomas's enormous tract, *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, which appeared in 1918, was a bullet aimed at Heinrich's gauntlet. It is at heart a defense of a certain kind of art, an art that does not sag when politics leans on it and does not have a preconceived political idea of how to conduct itself. Thomas states repeatedly that he refuses to surrender to system. He will remain the non-political man, "the impossible man," he will keep the right to be mistaken, to be pessimistic.

When Mann discusses the German Reformation, he is also, one gathers, discussing what he wants from art, and from contemporary Germanness: "an event and fact of the soul actually not capable of interpretation or criticism, like life.... One can call this revolutionary or reactionary, rebellious or preserving, democratic or anti-democratic: it is all this at once." This essentially Romantic view of the uninterpretable artwork is threatened by, and in turn opposes, Heinrich's simplicities, his large notions like Progress, Freedom, Democracy. Thomas scorns his brother as a Frenchified concept-machine, "civilization's *littérateur*."

Reflections of a Non-Political Man is a valid artistic cry made at an invalid political moment—and necessarily so, because Thomas refuses to be political, and refuses to see his refusal as itself political. (He would eventually come to the opposite conclusion, and argue that "even a rejection of politics is political: it merely connives at the politics of evil.") The book is intensely political, written as if by a more decorous Céline. Mann blames the war on everyone else, arguing that Britain and France were the true warriors. Democracy, he writes, "is foreign and poisonous to the German character."

Interestingly, however, his aesthetics are not very different from those that animate *The Magic Mountain* and all his subsequent work. He argues that fiction is a passage through error; he praises Nietzsche for writing that "the need for belief, for any sort of absolute yes and no, is a proof of weakness"; he cherishes Goethe for his impatience with mere one-sided opinions. His sensitivity for the artistic dialectic was not impaired by his enthusiasm for the war. It was his politics that suffered even as he claimed he had none, and it was his politics, not his art, that would spend the next twenty years repairing themselves. His art, on the other hand, would atone for his politics. It would atone dialectically—which would mean, supremely in *Doctor Faustus*, that it would have to atone for art itself.

The Magic Mountain represents the very defiance of system for which Mann was crying so loudly in *Reflections*. It is an allegory that behaves like a novel, except when it is behaving allegorically. Its length, and its thoroughness, keep all its many ideas agitated. It lives several lives at once. It is a *Bildungsroman* and a parody of one, because Hans Castorp's education at the sanatorium is really an education in death, spent in Hades. It is an essay about time, but also a novel about time, because it enacts its own profound meditations on time.

Can one narrate time? asks Mann. No, of course not, he replies. This would be like a note held for hours on end without resolution. But that is exactly what *The Magic Mountain* is. Indeed, just in one remark about time, we can catch *The Magic Mountain* atoning for *Reflections*. Hans remarks at one point that time is "a turning point in a circle," it is never linear. This seems to refer to Hegel's idea that "bad infinity" is linear, but that real infinity is dialectical, and circular.

Hans explains that the days get longer during winter, and when we get to the longest day, on June 21st, the start of summer, the days are getting shorter. "Like some practical joke," says Hans, "the start of winter is actually spring, and the start of summer is actually autumn." Then why, asks Hans, do people celebrate the solstice, dancing and cheering at the longest day? "Because they are now headed back down into the dark, maybe?... Is it melancholy mirth at the high-point?... Melancholy mirth and mirthful melancholy...." It is hard to read this and not think, as we are supposed to do surely, of the "long summer" of 1914, before the start of war, of the elation which was actually despair, and the triumph that was actually defeat.

But there are two other profound pendants hanging from this small meditation on time's circularity. One is formal. *The Magic Mountain* constantly reprises itself, and constantly repeats, while slightly altering at every repetition, its massive themes. (Mann's thoroughness, again.) The entire life of the novel's community at the sanatorium is based on a circular, daily, repetitive routine, and the book mimics this routine. Thus when Hans discusses the circularity of time, he is discussing the novel's own procedures. The novel is, as it were, discussing its own circularity even as it is being circular. (For this is at least the twentieth moment that the novel has discussed time.) Form and content are absolutely entwined in this book.

Secondly, Mann's notion of time's circularity, so essential to the form and the matter of *The Magic Mountain*, refutes the very premise of *Reflections*. In *Reflections*, Mann wrote that he had realized from the start of the war that it "would be a turning point in world history ... that afterwards, everything would be different, that nothing could become the same as before." It is impossible to read *The Magic Mountain* and believe such a thing; or rather, impossible while actually reading the novel, impossible while held in the serious game of *not quite*. A "turning-point" exists only on a circle. The circle of the artistic dialectic has defeated the linearity of politics.

The Magic Mountain is an allegory of European civilization's sickness. But it is above all a novel about that sickness, full of a novel's sympathy for those who do not deserve it. Thus Mann brilliantly represents Settembrini, who has Heinrich's liberal politics, with kindness, and he represents Herr Naphta's religious fascism with fascinated wariness. To put it crudely, Hans is revolved, like the reader, between these two positions, only to see that each contains the other, and that each does not merely contradict the other, but also contradicts itself.

In the famous chapter "Snow," Hans skis into a snowdrift, and gets lost by turning around in circles. He stops, and meditates. He feels himself between Settembrini and Naphta, between the license of freedom and the sentence of

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religion, between ignoring death and being consumed by it, "between mystical community and windy individualism." But no, he decides that "man is the master of contradictions, they occur through him, and so he is more noble than they ... more noble than life, too noble for it ... I will grant death no dominion over my thoughts.... *For the sake of goodness and love, man shall grant death no dominion over his thoughts.*"

It is a noble passage; and Mann is faithful simultaneously to the spirit of dialectic and to the spirit of the novelistic (for they are now identical) when he adds, a page later, that by Hans's bedtime, "his dream was already beginning to fade." There is no resolution. What is intellectually appropriate is also humanly true in this case: our grandest self-statements are frail memoranda.

It is this human and novelistic power that one wants to emphasize, since the intellectual tides are too often discussed at the expense of the novelistic waters. The best means of examining the extraordinary novelistic form of *The Magic Mountain* is to look briefly at Mann's use of one leitmotiv, that of the idea of "living horizontally." It is Settembrini who jocularly coins this expression near the beginning of the book, thereby enlarging the daily rest-cure into metaphor. The phrase is mocking. It refers both to a placid idleness at the sanatorium, and also, perhaps, to the posture required for intellectual or artistic criticism. The world outside does not live horizontally. Two hundred pages later, the metaphor appears again. Hans and his group have wandered into town, and are visiting the local cemetery. Here are the graves of the sanatorium's patients, "who had returned now for good and all to the horizontal form of existence." The metaphor, repeated, has moved its meaning a little: it now means death.

A hundred pages later, Hans's uncle James Tienappel arrives for a short visit. He takes fright at the horrid, death-loving placidity, and flees. Hans suspects that when Uncle James returns to his bourgeois life, it will seem pointless. For he has seen death. Uncle James, he imagines, "instead of heading off to his office after breakfast," will feel that he ought to "take a short constitutional, then ritually wrap himself in blankets, and assume a horizontal position." Now the phrase is reverting to one of its earlier meanings, that of the artistic or critical posture. Uncle James will return to his bourgeois life, Hans hopes, with an artistic sickliness.

Finally, a hundred pages later, when Hans's noble half-cousin Joachim is dying, he becomes bedridden, and Mann writes: "From then on Joachim assumed a permanent horizontal position." We have been returned to the idea of death. Thus the idea of living horizontally moves back and forth between its meanings, hovering somewhere between life and death, somewhere between art and sickness, somewhere between criticism and surrender, and somehow containing within itself both sets of opposed meanings. And each time the phrase appears, it has a true human pathos and power, not a theoretical one. Here the very form of the novel is itself the master of contradictions.

III.

Thomas Mann, with characteristic thoroughness, did not stop prosecuting himself for his political errors in 1914-18. There is something exceptionally moving about his reconciliation with Heinrich, about the brothers' exile in California in the late 1930s and 1940s. California: this has a double pathos. Only the most satirical and undignified centrifuge would have thrown Thomas Mann out to California; and yet the place's paradisal air, its pacific winds in a time of warring storms, its light during darkness, seem like a reward, not an exile, for Mann's great struggle.

The photographs of Mann in Pacific Palisades—a few are included in *Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann*—are curious, because Mann is now old and impossibly august, but the photographs are light-filled like the photographs of childhood. Here are the Californian interiors, with the books Mann was able to salvage from Germany, and yet the light coming in through the windows makes the room seem outside, makes the carpet a lawn. It looks like play; it is 1942.

This volume includes Thomas's address on Heinrich's seventieth birthday, delivered on May 2, 1941. As he had so often before, Mann once again systematically repudiates his earlier politics. "The intellect today is unmistakably entering into a moral epoch, an epoch in which a new religious and moral distinction is being drawn between good and evil. That signifies a certain simplification and rejuvenation of intellect, in opposition to all manner of tired and skeptical sophistication." He gladly becomes the concept-machine he once called his brother: "Freedom, truth, right, humanity—intellect dares, once again, to pronounce these words ... it must fight for them or itself perish."

Three years later, when Goebbels said "we firmly believe the German nation has been designated for a great future, for itself but also for other people, and that it must prove itself in this war," Mann wrote in his diary: "Roughly how I was writing 30 years ago." This was the real age of "Nietzsche triumphant," not 1910, and Mann wrote a novel to prove it, whose devil-hero was partly based on Nietzsche. This was *Doctor Faustus.*

The story of Adrian Leverkühn, the great composer who bargains with the devil, is perhaps too explicit. (It is finely translated by John E. Woods, in a new version.) It lacks the metaphorical fertility of *The Magic Mountain.* Written during the war in a time of desperation, it wants to mean everything, and dries its meanings out in a waste of shame. The connection made between the twelve-tone system and totalitarianism is a little strained, and yet much of the power of the allegory depends on it. Too often, Serenus Zeitblom, the novel's narrator, tells us that Adrian is devilish, that music is Manichean and produces both its own goodness and its own badness: "No one can follow my argument here who has not experienced as I have how

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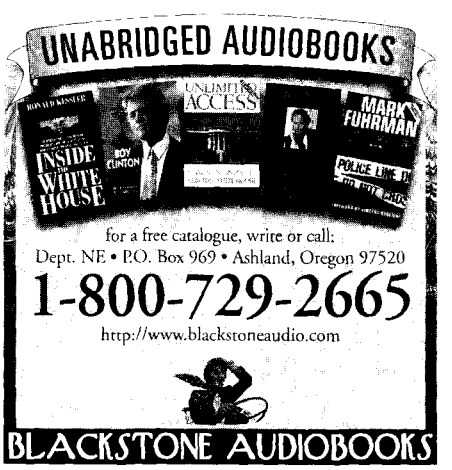

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close aestheticism and barbarism are to each other, or who has not felt how aestheticism prepares the way for barbarism in one's own soul."

Still, in one respect, *Doctor Faustus* is Mann's deepest artistic gesture. For in this book he atones for art; and in a buried way, for the dialectic of art. Early in the novel, Adrian strikes a chord, and says: "A chord like this ... has no key as such. It's all relationship, and the relations form a circle." This is the first of many suggestions that music contains within it all the potentialities for good and for evil. "Music is ambiguity as a system," says Adrian, and the novel shows just the danger of that ambiguity.

Yet Mann's work until this moment had been the very quintessence, the very movement, of ambiguity. What is Adrian saying, after all, except that his chord is like time's circle in *The Magic Mountain*? Music is the master of contradictions, implies Mann, but it may at any moment become a servant of one position if a Master from Germany tries to straighten it. The circle of the dialectic, the sustained note, crashes, in Adrian Leverkühn's diabolic hands, into the dissonance of the twelve-tone system.

These, Mann complained, were simplified times, and they demanded a new kind of commitment. *Doctor Faustus* is above all a novel of commitment. It asks whether Nietzsche's idea that "any sort of absolute yes and no is a proof of weakness" is not dangerously ambiguous. Dialectically it turns on the dialectic, and accuses it of a liable ambivalence. It shows the vulnerabilities of irresolution, of pampered ambiguity, of the serious game that is *not quite* serious—"and therefore not serious at all." It suggests that the very freedom of art—that it is not the same as life—can lull us into isolation.

Commitment, Heinrich's kind of commitment, was suddenly everything. Surely this was the reason why Mann called his novel a "radical confession." At the end of his career, he chastises the dialectic, and what moves us is that this is a self-questioning that is itself dialectical. For the novel that wonders if *not quite* has become a danger must itself be not quite—and therefore not quite the condemnation that it seems to be. The circle moves again. In reproaching the dialectic, Mann affirms it. In questioning irresolution, he enacts it. And in so doing, he affirms the novelistic once again. This was "the best he could possibly do." •

Groups and Happiness

BY ALAN WOLFE

Membership and Morals: The Personal Uses of Pluralism in America by Nancy L. Rosenblum

(Princeton University Press, 438 pp., $29.95)

I.

A janitor works sixteen years in a gymnasium before being fired. The gym is owned by the Mormons, who decide that all employees working for the Church, even those in nonreligious activities, must comply with the rules for eligibility for Mormon temples: tithing, church attendance, and abstinence from smoking and drinking. Should the janitor have a right to keep his job?

A private religious school in the South is established. There is no question that the founders of the school, as well as the parents who send their children to the school, are sincere religious believers. There is also no doubt that they are intent on keeping the school all white. Should the school be exempt from guarantees of nondiscrimination?

The Junior Chambers of Commerce, commonly called the Jaycees, define themselves as an organization to help young men at a particular stage in their careers make the contacts and learn the skills to advance themselves. Must the organization be open to women? Indeed, can the organization restrict its membership only to people of a certain age?

Determined to live in a pleasant environment, a group of citizens creates a private residential homeowners association. One of their rules forbids residents to own pets. A resident owns three cats, all of them noiseless, and she keeps them entirely within her apartment. The condominium board nevertheless orders her to rid herself of the pets or face eviction. Is the board within its rights to do so?

A lobbying group is formed to advance the goal of equality for women. One of its most deeply held beliefs is that a society which forbids women from obtaining abortion on demand treats women as second-class citizens and therefore violates the organization's goals. May such a group exclude from its membership a woman who considers herself a feminist, but who also believes that abortion is murder and should be illegal?

A group of citizens, fearful for the future of their country, form themselves into a militia. They meet frequently to let off steam, often bringing with them their guns to show each other. They post warnings about the need to take revolutionary steps on their Web page. Their rhetoric is filled with anti-Semitic and racist language. Should membership in such a group be against the law?

Two ways of responding to all the above questions can be found in the tradition of liberal political theory. One is premised on the rights of individuals. If discrimination is wrong, this response holds, then it hardly matters whether the entity which engages in the practice is private or public, for the stigmatized individual is still singled out for exclusion based on purely arbitrary characteristics. Moreover, it is increasingly difficult to draw the line between private and public authorities in any case. Residential homeowners associations are quasi-public because they carry out security functions and organize basic services for their residents. In small towns, private associations such as the Jaycees develop close ties to sources of public authority; the fact that they have considerable power in determining who succeeds is the best reason to insure that they are open to all. Private religious schools deliberately seeking to avoid public mandates take on a public character in doing so; and avoiding the law is just as "public" as obeying the law. Thus the protection of individual rights—especially such fundamental rights as being free from discrimination or being able to express one's views—requires an occasional invasion of the boundaries that private organizations establish around themselves.

Against this view stands another strain of political liberalism, the one that is usually identified with the term "pluralism." In the modern world, pluralists hold, political association is a crucial value in and of itself. From a pluralist perspective, the more groups there are, and the more diverse their objectives and their criteria for membership, the richer the political life of the society. For one thing, such groups soften the

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directives of the state; American legislative and regulatory policy has long been influenced by the notion that delegating authority to groups—such as the common practice of allowing organizations of doctors or lawyers to issue credentials to new members of their profession—adds a degree of flexibility to strict bureaucratic rules. For another thing, and more important, groups socialize their members by teaching about political engagement and expanding their immediate self-interest. Without groups, pluralists have long believed, the individual and the state would confront each other directly, creating an instability that might lead to authoritarianism or to anomie.

In American political science, pluralism was all the rage in the first twenty-five years after World War II. Fearing the emergence of what was then called "mass society"—isolated individuals, wandering around with no proper sense of identity—social scientists turned back to Tocqueville to emphasize the importance of intermediate associations. Political life was group life, the textbooks of the period argued with benumbing regularity. Still, pluralism was contested turf. As the 1960s progressed, some began to argue that all groups were not equal; the political power of business groups in particular dominated others to such a degree that pluralism was judged to have an inherent (and ideological) bias. With the possible exception of race and gender, the championing of groups seems to have all but disappeared from the contemporary study of politics.

When pluralism came crashing down in the aftermath of the 1960s, the fears of the theorists of mass society seemed to come true—if not in political reality, then in the way political scientists studied that reality. For without groups, all that was left was the individual versus the state. Marxists tended to focus on the latter: the 1970s were a time of intense theorizing about the nature of the state in capitalist society. Yet this was a minority development. The more significant reaction to the demise of pluralism was the emergence of rational choice theory. Borrowing from economics, political scientists took the individual decision-maker as their focus, analyzing just about every manifestation of political behavior as an expression of self-interest. And one of those manifestations turned out to be groups themselves. Considerable attention was directed to explaining how groups managed to survive in a world of rational choosers. For if people could obtain the benefits of group membership without contributing anything to group formation—this was the "free rider" problem brilliantly brought to life by the late Mancur Olson Jr.—then groups contained an internal contradiction that threatened their stability. It was as if individuals were the only reality, for at least their preferences could be quantified. Anything else, from the group to the state, was viewed as metaphysical.

Without an appreciation of the importance of group life, however, the study of politics is unable to offer much guidance to the kinds of dilemmas posed when the qualifications of group membership collide with the rights of individuals. This is doubly unfortunate, because none of those dilemmas has an easy resolution. If we believe that individual rights should be the ultimate trump card—that the Mormons cannot fire a gentile from a nonreligious activity, or that black children have every right to attend a segregated religious academy created to exclude black children—all groups will eventually become identical groups.

It does not demean the importance of rights to point out that the kind of liberalism that stands unswervingly behind them often takes on an imperial quality. Sorry, the principled liberal says, your group has to play by liberal rules; and this turns out to be a short step to the proposition that all groups have to be liberal groups. As odd as that injunction may sound, some of the best political theorists in America argue its merits. "Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society," Michael Walzer has written, "only a democratic civil society can create a democratic state." Nancy Rosenblum calls this "the logic of congruence." The implication of this point of view is that undemocratic groups—associations that are exclusionary, secretive, racist, or conspiratorial—do not quite belong in civil society, properly understood. Taken to its logical conclusion, the logic of congruence, in its secure belief that it knows which groups are legitimate, begins to sound distinctly illiberal.

If the dangers of imperial liberalism are self-evident, however, so are the problems of pure pluralism. Laissez-faire economics is governed by the hope—it is little more than a hope—that unrestrained competition will somehow lead to optimal results for the economy as a whole. Pure pluralism similarly assumes that the passions of politics can somehow be constrained by group membership. Rosenblum argues that there will always be alienated and violent people in society. Given that reality, she asks, isn't it better to allow them to join groups that might siphon off their hostility than to allow them to remain unconnected to anyone?

The answer is actually unclear. Groups can ignite sparks as well as damp out fires. For this reason, pluralism requires a degree of stoic detachment that is difficult to achieve when real lives are at stake. To be faithful to pluralist premises, one must be prepared to soften, if not occasionally to abandon, the liberal command to avoid cruelty, for a goodly proportion of the world's cruelty takes place not between one individual and another, but between a group and its own members—let alone those who might be excluded from its membership.

To deal intelligently with the conundrums of group life, political theory, moral philosophy, and constitutional law desperately require a rigorous analysis of the role that associations ought to play in sustaining a good society. Such an analysis is precisely Nancy Rosenblum's great accomplishment. Her unflinching defense of the moral benefits of pluralism, while not quite doing for groups what John Rawls did for individuals, ought to establish a new foundation for returning political science to the pluralism that it precipitously abandoned.

Rosenblum's book begins where most things begin these days, with debates about the state of civil society. It is taken as something of an axiom in contemporary social science (and in American politics) that the sorts of voluntary associations celebrated by Tocqueville are in decline. But why, Rosenblum asks, do we want such groups in the first place? Oddly enough, many of those who try to answer this question think groups are a good thing for reasons that have almost nothing to do with groups themselves.

We have already encountered what Rosenblum calls the "congruence" approach. By arguing that groups are good because they contribute to democratic virtues, congruence theorists actually bypass the moral benefits of group life in favor of the moral benefits of citizenship in the nation-state. For these thinkers, groups are just a means to the end of more effective political participation. Against this view stands what Rosenblum calls the "mediating" approach. It posits that groups are good because they protect the individual against the state. Yet this approach also treats group membership as a byproduct of something else: individual freedom.

Both ways of thinking about groups, Rosenblum argues, downplay the "Hegelian moment" out of which a concern with civil society emerged. For Hegel, as for Rosenblum, the groups that constitute civil society are good to the degree to which they constitute a "second family," linking one person to another in ways which, in Hegel's words, enable "the livelihood, happiness, and legal status of

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one man [to be] interwoven with the livelihood, happiness, and rights of all."

One way to defend the morality of association is to emphasize the role that groups play in expanding people's horizons. By means of their groups, individuals learn what it means to cooperate, to restrain their self-interest for the sake of common purposes, a lesson which, if properly learned, can be applied to society as a whole. This liberal hope—Rosenblum calls it an "expectancy"—is most fully developed in the writings of John Dewey, a thinker whom Rosenblum puzzlingly tends to overlook. But the strength of Rosenblum's account is that she willingly confronts the possibility Dewey downplayed. What if groups cannot be counted on to further liberal ends?

There is an obvious reason to ask such a question, for there is something inherently non-liberal about groups. They are created to exclude others. They emphasize specific fellow-feeling over capacious moral obligation. "Associations," Rosenblum writes, "mirror, reinforce, and actively create social inequalities." If so, do they nonetheless offer moral benefits? Absolutely, Rosenblum responds. People are different; and so groups will be different. "The principal thing is the possibility for individuals to have associations in which they feel at home, even if that means feeling superior."

It is greatly to her credit that Rosenblum goes out of her way to choose the most illiberal groups that she can find to make a liberal case for the moral benefits of pluralism. Take that church-related school established for the purpose of maintaining racial segregation. In the Supreme Court decision that ruled against the school's claim for exemption from anti-discrimination laws, Justice Goldberg wrote that "the rights of African Americans to participate in our society on equal terms must have ascendancy over a religious practice that can be subordinated without impairing the religion's viability." Rosenblum bitingly charges that Goldberg "invents his own theology," as if he can tell another person what that person's faith requires to be viable. "The ruling compelling a church school to admit unwelcome members is the very definition of loss of self-government," Rosenblum writes.

If we are to take groups seriously, we must have them warts and all. Rosenblum even extends her maxim to cults. The very existence of a totalistic religion is an indication of the purpose that it serves for the individuals who join it; but liberals appalled by its tactics must nonetheless be reluctant to intervene in its affairs. The best that liberals can do is to insist on an "exit" option, a requirement that people be able to leave. (It is an option that such groups usually resist furnishing.) Rosenblum wisely warns that "we cannot expect to infuse liberal democratic principles and protections into the self-understanding of religious groups, not even when it concerns self-presentation in official arenas."

Not everyone will accept these claims. Justice Goldberg's language may have been insensitive to religious belief, but it was a moving defense of racial dignity. Writing in defense of democratic education, Amy Gutmann has insisted that parents ought to allow their children exposure to worlds outside their family and faith. Martha C. Nussbaum argues that, owing to religious orthodoxy, Brigham Young University fails to educate its students in the cultivation of humanity. And very few liberals see Louis Farrakhan's ministry as a fruit of the Enlightenment. To such critics, Rosenblum responds that there are many roads to liberalism. Allowing people the freedom to join causes of their own choosing may be better than demanding that all groups conform to the same liberal values.

We ought to approach the question of homeowners associations in the same way, Rosenblum continues. Intellectuals usually denounce such associations for excluding the poor and for regulating the lives of their members down to the colors in which they can paint their houses and the height to which they can build their fences. But if people lose rights over their property in such associations, they gain control over their collective environment. Once again, Rosenblum hammers home her main point: the moral benefits of membership are "indeterminate." We do not value groups because we know that they will make people nicer. And pluralism demands that we take our chances with groups, prizing the membership that they offer, not the results that they guarantee.

If we cannot tell groups what results they ought to produce, how much should we insist on what kind of members they ought to recruit? Contemporary liberals believe that the greatest cruelty of all is the cruelty of exclusion. Individuals who want to join a group but are prevented from doing so because of their race, their gender, or indeed anything about them will experience stigmatization. Thus the legal theorist Kenneth Karst writes that assigning people to the status of outsiders means denying them their very selfhood.

Karst's liberalism is in many ways a new liberalism, best appreciated against these words penned by Justice Douglas, an older liberal, in *Moose Lodge* v. *Irvis* (1972): "Government may not tell a man or woman who his associates must be. The individual can be as selective as he desires." And on this point, Rosenblum sides with the old liberalism, not with the new. The Jaycees who excluded women from their organization did not necessarily hate women. They simply wanted, for reasons of their own, to belong to a group composed only of young men, a wish that was thwarted by the state of Minnesota when it passed a law compelling the organization to admit members it did not want to admit.

Besides, who is to say that self-respect is irreparably harmed by such exclusion? People who know their self-worth will not be harmed by groups that do not want them. They will dismiss such groups as unworthy of their affections. And those who insist on their right to join groups that do not want them can take on a pathetic air, "passing" for something they are not rather than rejoicing in who they truly are. "We have lost Hawthorne's cold eye on the snobbery and malice of associations," Rosenblum writes. "Lack of consideration as a result of prejudice and ill-will is not a public harm and is not officially corrigible." The best policy with respect to groups that exclude others is to let them be. History is filled with examples of sects which ultimately seek respectability and broaden their criteria of admittance in doing so. Moreover, groups that are forced to give up choosing who can join them lose one of the most precious benefits that groups can confer: their capacity to express a point of view. Even the American Civil Liberties Union, if it admitted people who did not believe in civil liberties, would quickly lose its capacity to advocate and agitate for its positions.

In Rosenblum's view, acts of exclusion are designed to make a political statement that ought to warrant First Amendment protection: black-only student organizations at universities are sending a message about race that may be more important to them than any concrete results of their exclusionary membership policies. To compel association, therefore, is to coerce expression. A society promotes liberal goals more effectively by having more points of view expressed than it does by guaranteeing everyone access to everything.

This is a book devoted to hard cases, and secret societies and paramilitary organizations constitute the hardest cases of all. Rosenblum is not convinced that all forms of extreme right-wing activity are necessarily dangerous to democratic politics. Some militias engage in military exercises primarily for expressive reasons. Young people attracted to racist groups, she writes, are often more alien-

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ated than they are filled with hate. Militias, in her view, have roots in the American political tradition, especially those forms of republicanism that emphasize the moral benefits of self-defense, militarism, and heroic romanticism. Those who would ban hate groups fail to recognize the harm that conspiratorial thinking and sectarianism do to these groups themselves, Rosenblum maintains. Anything but armed for a coup d'état, they are composed of people who distrust each other as much as they distrust organized society. We ought therefore to listen to those attracted to such groups before we denounce them as terrorists: "Discussion and understanding come to a dead stop unless we consider specific associations, with specific grievances, engaged in specific activities, and the ideologies that cause us to cast them in divergent ways."

The point that Rosenblum wishes to make is that there may be moral benefits from even the most immoral associations, and a liberal society ought to acknowledge them. Still, in her unwillingness to exclude militias from her sympathy to groups, Rosenblum runs the risk of being a group groupie. She seems almost incapable of finding a group that does not illustrate the moral benefits of membership. I say almost, because she does draw the line at one kind of group: those generally associated with the term "identity politics."

At one level, demands for recognition, as Charles Taylor has argued, seem to offer moral benefits for membership: if the self is constituted by the group, then an acknowledgement of the group's dignity enhances the moral stature of all its potential members. But these are only potential members, Rosenblum insists. Identity groups are not associations. They do not have membership lists and they do not bring people together to pursue common purposes. Indeed, they run roughshod over association when they claim that that there is an "authentic" way to be black or female, for such a point of view denies to the individual the capacity to determine how he or she wants his or her views expressed.

The moral benefits of pluralism flow from the fact that, in a democracy, no group can ever get everything that it wants for its members. Every group must engage in compromise to be effective. Identity groups, by contrast, offer symbolic benefits rather than tangible ones. And having claimed that group recognition is essential to define the self, they find themselves unable to compromise, for who can tell a person to accept less than his or her entire self? The moral benefits of pluralism include the fashioning of a political self; but identity groups, by positing a prior and unchanging definition of such a self, offer none of the moral benefits that pluralism makes available.

So, then, if we do not owe each other admission into the groups that we value, what do we owe each other? Rosenblum concludes her book by advancing three liberal virtues: we should treat people equally, we should treat them with easy spontaneity, we should speak out against ordinary injustice. "Liberal democracy," she writes, "does not demand an Emersonian faith in individuals." We should not want of others that they acknowledge our true selves, and we should not seek from others proofs of their authenticity. Calling her recommendations "tentative" and "modest," Rosenblum argues against associating pluralism with such grand notions as civic competence or moral freedom. It is enough to focus on a "disposition to perform the small daily acts that make up democracy in everyday life," for these "are critical for navigating the pluralism that *is* everyday life." In this way, we reinforce the daily habits that make democracy possible. And if the practice of pluralism must be indeterminate, then so must the theory.

There is something too neat and orderly in contemporary liberal theory. The late Isaiah Berlin (another thinker mysteriously neglected by Rosenblum) spent a lifetime urging political thinkers to heed Kant's warnings against trying to straighten the crooked timber of humanity. Liberal theorists continue to manifest a disposition to treat one great idea—rationality, liberty, equality, inclusion—as an end that deserves to trump all those unfortunate characteristics of individuals—parochialism, envy, meanness, intolerance—that stand in its way. By asking us to accept a certain degree of chaos in an indeterminate world, Rosenblum provides an important corrective to the steamroller tendencies that threaten to transform liberalism into its opposite.

Still, there is a danger. It is that the pursuit of indeterminacy can itself become determinate. Rosenblum does not always manage to avoid this danger. In response to the algorithmic tendencies in some versions of liberal theory, which seek the one great rule by which difficult cases can be decided, Rosenblum finds herself in the position of arguing over and over again that membership is always preferable to alienation or isolation. There are two things wrong with such a moral principle. One is that it is not always true. The other is that it fails to distinguish adequately between the different kinds of goods that membership provides.

Iris Murdoch once wrote that the key to understanding a philosopher's work is to discover what he is most afraid of. Rosenblum is most driven by the fear of isolation. She has a horror of atomism. There can be little doubt that people attracted to militias are alienated from their society; but the question is whether society is best off if they are in or out of groups which respond to their anger. The Minutemen leader Robert DePugh is quoted (twice) by Rosenblum as saying, "out, they're liable to do most anything at any time without anybody knowing it except them.... But if they're part of a group ... well, then there's a good chance someone in the organization will know about it and they're going to take steps to bring this person under control."

For Rosenblum, this is evidence enough of the benefits of membership. But can we really take the word of a man as alienated from society as those he wants to recruit? It may serve DePugh's purposes to recruit such people, but it does not necessarily serve society's purpose. People such as DePugh are in fact the greatest profiteers from atomism in America. More to the point, some "kooks and nuts," to use DePugh's term, may find their antisocial inclinations fueled by group membership, their fantasies of violence turned into opportunities, their prejudices ratified and reinforced.

The problem is not just that group membership can be bad. It is also that alienation and solitariness can sometimes be good. We do not expect our best poets to join associations designed to promote poetry; isolation, we believe, is the price one pays for artistic creativity. As much as we might appreciate the benefits conveyed by groups, shouldn't we also have some sympathy for the resident of a planned community who wants to keep a pet or to paint her house purple? I am persuaded that my work as a sociologist has not been impaired by my repeated failures to join the American Sociological Association.

Just as liberalism taken to extremes becomes illiberal, a pluralism which insists on membership becomes a lofty theory of conformism. Surely membership is not always and everywhere preferable to non-membership; and the view that it is forever preferable surely fails to respect the genuine plurality of a society of many ends. While Rosenblum was writing *Membership and Morals*, she was also editing a volume of Thoreau's political writings. What she learned from Thoreau, she writes, is that even he, the embodiment of radical individualism, nonetheless was "acutely sensitive to the hybrid character of association." Yet surely the lesson

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taught by Thoreau is that his choice to reject the conventional society of his day was a moral choice worth respecting. American letters have been permanently enriched because there was no branch of the Sierra Club in nineteenth-century Concord.

Even when we agree that being in is better than being out, membership can serve a variety of different goods. Should one judge some goods as more beneficial for democratic citizenship than others? Rosenblum is reluctant to do so. Worried that any such judgment is a step toward substituting one's determined objectives for the indeterminacy pluralism requires, she goes to the other extreme and finds herself unable or unwilling to denounce paramilitary groups for their hostility to the democratic rules of the game. It is as if she is asserting that membership, in and of itself, is a good that we ought to value. Yet some things might be more important than membership.

One of those things is a society's responsibility to protect human life. There is reason to worry that violence, or even a threat of violence, is an evil so primary and so palpable that those who flirt with it cannot expect to be treated as members of just any other organization. Some theorists of identity politics have broadened the definition of violence, calling any statement they deem to be prejudiced against women a form of rape, or any principled opposition to affirmative action a kind of lynching; but this should not deter us from recognizing that, among all those tactics by which individuals and groups seek their political objectives, violence is different. An individual who is silenced may some day speak again. An individual who is dead can never speak again. (Or live again.) A case can be made that it is worth tolerating groups that seek to deprive others of their rights, but when such a group begins to take steps to arm itself in its struggle against its enemies, a community cannot afford to allow its members to experience the moral benefits of pluralism.

Rosenblum's strong sympathy for associational life leads her to turn a blind eye—worse, to sound sometimes like an apologist—for violent forms of political expression. "Even conspiratists are rarely conspirators," she writes in one of her murkiest sentences. In Rosenblum's view, American politics is filled with images of warfare, and hatred of the enemy, and threats of violence. The real danger, she argues, comes from these more respectable purveyors of hate—right-wing preachers, talk-radio hosts, professional anti-Semites—off whom real hate groups feed. All of which may be true, one is tempted to respond, but none of which means that armed groups to the right of such demagogues ought to be absolved of their own responsibility for violence. Such activities represent something far more dangerous than what Rosenblum calls "the harsh face of democratic discontent." Even in the most diverse of pluralistic worlds, the game of politics has to be played with rules, and one of those rules ought to involve respect for the lives of other people.

Rosenblum grounds her defense of the moral benefits of pluralism in psychological and sociological realism. The benefits of groups, she insists, stem not from a simple-minded psychology that views membership in groups as providing the identity which egoism lacks, nor from some theory of moral development over the life cycle which group memberships satisfies, but from the deeply personal experiences of political involvement that each individual discovers differently. Yet Rosenblum never offers a satisfactory account of exactly what kind of moral benefits individuals can expect from their experience in groups. The result is that any experience takes on the moral equivalent of any other. For this reason, membership in militias can appear, in her analysis, to be not all that different from membership in the Presbyterian Church. Rosenblum sorely lacks even the sketch of a psychological theory that would give more substance to the question of what it is that groups actually offer their members.

Still, there is no disputing the importance of this book. Underlying Rosenblum's tone is the sense that America has moved too far down the road of the more imperial versions of liberalism that look with dismay on the inequalities and the vices which flourish in private associations. *Membership and Morals* is not just another lament about bowling alone. Rosenblum does not suggest that civil society is in jeopardy because we have too few bowling leagues; but it may be in jeopardy if all bowling leagues were forced to admit non-bowlers, and even anti-bowlers, into their ranks. What matters is not the quantity of private associations in civil society. What matters is what those associations do.

Even as we pursue justice, equality, and diversity, we need to respect and to honor difference. That turns out to be a much harder task than most liberals recognize, for it also means that we need to accept a certain amount of discrimination, venality, religious orthodoxy, wrong-headedness, perversity, and snobbery. Since humans are human, politics is very hard. In reminding us of this truth, Rosenblum's book reminds us also that liberalism ought to lighten up a bit in its insistence on abstract principles if it wishes to remain genuinely liberal. •

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 4*

H-bomb

To the editors:

Most of Tzvetan Todorov's review of Edward O. Wilson's new book, *Consilience*, is preoccupied with the old debate, nature vs. nurture ("The Surrender to Nature," April 27). This is an endless battle. What is disturbing is that, in his anger and frustration with Wilson, Todorov draws the H-weapon. In the final paragraph, he asks Wilson to write a sequel to *Consilience* that would explain the difference between "Social Darwinism, the doctrine that was adopted by Hitler, and ... the ways in which it differs from sociobiology." This reminds me of my days in grade school, when intellectual retort seldom advanced beyond "and so's your old man." Wilson's sociobiology bears the same relation to Hitler's genocide as Mother Teresa's Catholicism bears to the Spanish Inquisition.

JAMES HURLEY
Nevada City, California

Rebels without a cause

To the editors:

Daniel H. Pink's claim that self-employed workers are taxed unfairly is greatly exaggerated ("The 1099 Rebellion," April 27). True, they pay 12.4 percent of their earnings up to $65,400 (in 1997) for Social Security and another 2.9 percent of their earnings without limit for Medicare. But so do employees. Though *nominally* an employee pays only half these amounts while an employer pays the other half, the employer's payroll tax contribution comes at the expense of employees' wages.

ERIC RAKOWSKI
Berkeley, California

To the editors:

Daniel H. Pink may be waiting a long time for the "1099 Rebellion" to begin, considering some of the substantial tax advantages that self-employed taxpayers enjoy.

While the self-employed can deduct their legitimate expenses off the top, an employee's nonreimbursed business expenses are only allowable to the extent they exceed 2 percent of the employee's adjusted gross income from all sources. Self-employed taxpayers also get to squirrel away and deduct more money for retirement in the form of Keogh and similar plans than do employees who, if lucky, will be offered a chance to participate in their employers' 401(k) plans, which offer an annual cap of $10,000.

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And, while Pink seems to think it a disadvantage to pay estimated taxes in lieu of the withholding required from an employee's paycheck, most taxpayers would find that the inconvenience of mailing in a check four times a year is greatly outweighed by the benefit of holding on to and investing their money for a full three months or so instead of forking it over to the government as often as every week. Furthermore, payers of estimated tax whose incomes rise substantially can still base their current tax payments on the previous year's liability, making up the difference on April 15 of the subsequent year without incurring a penalty. Employees receiving a big raise or bonus, on the other hand, are subject to withholding on the higher amount right away.

ROBERT THEE
West Hempstead, New York

To the editors:

As a self-employed lawyer with a modest solo practice, my 1997 IRS bill came to a third of my 1997 earnings. The only way the self-employed may deduct their entire health insurance premium is to incorporate. But the tax savings will hardly offset the bookkeeping and accounting expenses for having to file annual corporate tax returns in addition to personal tax return. And a self-employed, whether incorporated or not, who files a tax return without benefit of an accountant, is inviting a tax audit.

BARBARA HUDSON
Danville, Virginia

Placebo effect

To the editors:

In her article on recent studies of whether a short course of treatment with the drug AZT can help prevent HIV-infected pregnant women from passing on the virus to their babies ("Trial and Error," April 27), Deborah Hellman writes that, rather than giving some of the women in the study AZT and others a placebo pill, "researchers could have, and should have, given all women short-course AZT and compared their transmission rates to national averages."

However, the point of a placebo-controlled study is to determine not whether the treatment works, but whether it works because of the properties of the drug rather than the expectation of improvement held by the patients who receive it. That expectation can give the appearance of efficacy to a drug with little intrinsic value, so it is worth measuring. Members of the general population might not hold such an expectation of improvement if they were untreated. Thus, comparing them to women on the short-course AZT treatment would not enable researchers to determine that the treatment works because of the drug itself rather than the hope inspired by being treated.

NANCY ALVARADO
Aliso Viejo, California

Slaughtered story

To the editors:

Amazing how a rash of dots marking the omission of the essence of an article can make what remains seem "unbelievably silly." Your "Notebook" item of April 6 slaughters my article on the Clintons like a butcher who dismembers a lamb in order to create amusement by displaying entrails of odd shape and vivid color. TNR readers would not guess that the article from which you hacked was valued by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Minneapolis Star Tribune* among newspapers that ran it.

You quote illustrations from my article, but omit its argument. My points were:

(1) The self-indulgence of Clinton, like that of Mao, produced a narcissism that broke down (in the leader's mind) the distinction between true and false.

(2) Two ambitious wives, Hillary Clinton and Jiang Qing, were willing to see their husbands' philandering as a secondary matter because they clung to the power that stemmed from him. This made a mockery of the feminist principles that both women cherished.

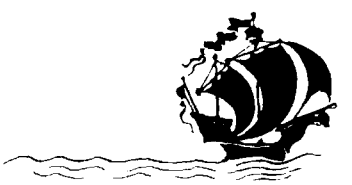
(3) There was a quid pro quo of great public consequence involved as both first ladies silently accepted their husband's philandering.

In my article, the detail for explicating the dangers that private extravagancies by a top leader carry for public policy came from China. This sent you over the top. Perhaps you consider China off the human screen and not to be compared with America. I do not.

ROSS TERRILL
Austin, Texas

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Letters may also be sent electronically to: TNR@aol.com

MOVING?



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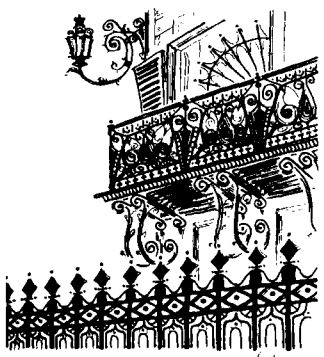
SAN FRANCISCO DIARIST

Historionics

IN HAIGHT-ASHBURY, THE PAST HAS become the currency of the present. Smudged storefront windows are filled with indiscriminate bric-a-brac from the '60s and '70s; inside, the places resemble cluttered storage rooms more than shops. Even the more aggressive, commercially minded stores are often dedicated to a kind of archival preservation. At the spacious Amoeba record store, it was disorienting to see the ten-inch records that I had listened to on an old turntable as a child now being attractively displayed on the wall in shiny plastic bags and selling for top dollar. Nietzsche, who divided history into antiquarian, monumental, and critical categories, warned that antiquarianism results in provincialism. But, in the United States, collecting the past doesn't seem parochial so much as hopeful—a way to slide casually into the future. In San Francisco, on the edge of the frontier, it is retro dance clubs that are now in vogue. History isn't bunk; it's hip.

FOR MOST COUNTRIES, THOUGH, history is still a minefield. A few weeks ago, I gave a talk at a conference titled "Japan's War Memories: Amnesia or Concealment?" that was hosted by the University of San Francisco and the Japan Policy Research Institute. As you can guess, the question mark was pretty much a rhetorical one. Speaker after speaker upbraided the Japanese for failing to confront their war crimes, most notably the rape of Nanking in December 1937. Though disturbing, there was nothing particularly surprising, I noted, about the Japanese attempt to smooth over the unpleasant parts of their history. Did the Germans apologize for wiping out French villages or bombarding Paris in 1870? The difference in 1945, of course, was that the Holocaust was a unique act, one that left Germany, unlike other nations, no room for dodging.

UNFORTUNATELY, GERMANY HAS in many ways succumbed to a self-flagellation that substitutes a cult of contrition for genuine remorse. It began in the 1960s, when the student left detected "fascism" in almost every nook and cranny of the democratic West. But, as Jeffrey Herf shows in *Divided Memory*, the most profound book to appear in the past decade on German history, the real continuity with the Nazi era was in East Germany, where the regime carried out anti-Semitic purge trials in the 1950s and assisted Arab terrorists. Ironically, the German left busily denounced the Federal Republic for its deficiencies while remaining oblivious to the nature of the regime directly across the Berlin Wall. Indeed, in the 1970s, the Social Democrats and intellectuals such as Günter Grass came to see the Communist state as providing a possible alternative to capitalism. Today, the rise of neo-Nazism in the east is a product of the refusal of the Communists, who always portrayed themselves as Hitler's true victims, to confront the Jewish catastrophe.



THE TRUTH IS THAT Communists don't just have a troubled history; they also have trouble with history. Take China. Beijing continues to treat the Japanese atrocities in Nanking with the utmost circumspection. Though the Nanking museum graphically documents the atrocities that took place there, the building itself is almost hidden from public view behind an anonymous, gray wall topped with barbed wire. Nanking, as the Communists know, looks a little too much like a precursor of the mass terror that Mao and company carried out during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, when tens of millions perished.

TO COUNTER BEIJING'S SILENCE, Chinese-Americans have begun to excavate their ancestors' past. Since the recent publication of Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, Japanese war crimes have become a hot-button issue. An "Alliance for Preventing the Truth of Sino-Japanese war" has formed in the Bay Area. I ventured into this contested territory by objecting to the equation of Nanking with the Holocaust, prompting one conference participant to complain to me that the Jews do not have an exclusive right to suffering. Ukrainians and other ethnic groups also often lodge the same charge. Is the life of a Ukrainian worth less than the life of a Jew? Obviously not. But to distinguish among kinds of suffering is surely not to create a hierarchy of woe. It is to understand the systematic nature of the Final Solution.

IN CONTRAST TO GERMANY, THE Chinese government has never really faced up to the legacy of Mao's terror, preferring to talk about "mistakes" that were committed rather than about calculated murder. As for the Chinese people, as the distinguished Asian scholar Chalmers Johnson pointed out at the conference, they might be willing to forgive Nanking but never the boost that the Japanese ended up giving the Communists by exposing the weakness of the nationalist government. The Chinese gravitated toward the Communists because they thought they couldn't be as bad as the Japanese. They weren't. They were worse. That's why one of the most telling lines in Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* comes when the young Dalai Lama tells one of his advisers that Tibetans have always been able to work out a compromise with the Chinese. His adviser looks at him mournfully and says these Chinese are not the old Chinese: "They are Communists."

A FEW WEEKS AGO in Washington, the Chinese embassy demanded that the International Film Festival withdraw the film *Windhorse*, named after the messages that Tibetans scribble on scraps of paper and release to their gods atop the Himalayas. The festival ignored the Chinese demand. And what better endorsement could the film have received? Time, as Herodotus observed, can draw the color from what man has brought into being. But movies have become one way of preserving it. In the fall of 1996, director Paul Wagner shot many of the scenes in Nepal and Tibet itself by using a Sony Digital Betacam and by pretending to be a tourist. He managed to create a gripping drama of a young rising Tibetan singer named Dolkar whom the Chinese attempt to coopt and whose cousin Pema, a Buddhist nun, is tortured to death.

THE TENSION IN THE FILM IS between the past and the future: Pema represents many Tibetans' desire for tradition and independence from the Chinese; Dolkar, the allure of pop culture, discos and pool halls, fast cars, and even faster money—albeit coupled with the ever-present threat of brute force—that the Chinese are promoting. After all, the Tibetans who took part in the film, secretly, did so at great peril to their lives. The movie shows how the Chinese have forbidden the locals even to utter the name of the Dalai Lama. It was the first film I've seen where a number of the closing credits read: "Name Withheld."

JACOB HEILBRUNN

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Let me ask you something... If you had a choice what would it be, Marijuana or Martinis?

Millions of Americans who are highly productive and stable clandestinely choose marijuana over martinis. They say that it's less toxic to their bodies than alcohol. But while the government classifies both substances as drugs, mysteriously one is legal while the other is not. Why should that be so?

The scientific evidence doesn't justify this distinction. The National Academy of Sciences has concluded that marijuana is one of the least dangerous drugs, legal or otherwise. More than a dozen commissions in the U.S. and other countries have found that its dangers have been exaggerated and that moderate use is rarely harmful.

On the other hand, alcohol is a leading cause of disease, violence and accidents. So why has our government arrested millions of adults who prefer marijuana? And why have such arrests doubled in recent years?

Is this right? Shouldn't adults have the right to choose marijuana over martinis? Think about it.

And if you want more information, write me.

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